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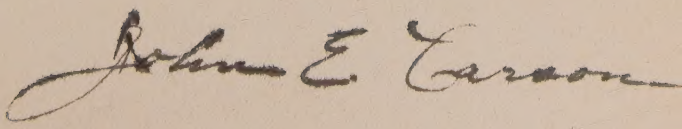

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# SOULS IN ACTION

## The Crucible of the New Life

EXPANDING THE NARRATIVE OF
TWICE-BORN MEN

By
HAROLD BEGBIE
*Author of "Twice-Born Men," "The Vigil," &c.*

HODDER & STOUGHTON
NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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MRS. HUGH PRICE HUGHES

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Surely there are in every man's Life certain rubs, doublings, and wrenches, which pass a while under the effects of chance, but at the last well examined, prove the meer hand of God.—*Religio Medici.*

*Evidences* of Christianity! I am weary of the word. Make a man feel the *want* of it; rouse him, if you can, to the self-knowledge of his *need* of it; and you may safely trust it to its own Evidence.—*Aids to Reflection.*

It was to this Change of Nature, of Life and Spirit, to this certain, immediate Deliverance from the Power of Sin . . . that Men were then called to, as true Christianity. And the Preachers of it bore Witness, not to a Thing that they had heard, but to a Power of Salvation, a Renewal of Nature, a Birth of Heaven, a Sanctification of the Spirit, which they themselves had received.—*The Way to Divine Life.*

If a man is not rising upwards to be an angel, depend upon it, he is sinking downwards to be a devil. He cannot stop at the beast. The most savage men are not beasts; they are worse, a great deal worse.—Coleridge's *Table Talk.*

It is the plague of manie, that they are not plagued: even this is their punishment, the want of punishment; . . . an insensible Heart is the Devil's Anvil, he fashioneth all sins on it, and the blowes are not felt.—*The Gallant's Burden.*

They have drawn on forces which exist, and on a soul which answers.—*Human Personality.*

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# PREFACE

IN two chief respects the narratives composing this book differ from those in *Twice-Born Men.* They are instances of conversion, but not of sudden, violent, and passionate conversion. Even so profound a thinker and so far-seeing an observer as Frederic Myers appears to have regarded conversion only in this manner, whereas the most interesting, the most striking, and the most conclusive cases of the miracle are those in which a gradual and quite tranquil change of heart leads to the new birth.

Professor Granger, in *The Soul of a Christian,* tells of a revivalist preacher who condemned a Scotch congregation for not responding to his appeal for sudden change: "A woman rebuked him by saying that her mother had been praying in the hills for five years before she was converted: how was she to be converted in five minutes?" There could be no narrower view of conversion than that which shuts out of count and regards only as cases of natural development, those fundamental changes in the soul which are gradually produced; so long as there is a culminating point, a place at which the spirit com-

pletely turns about and becomes definitely conscious of a new life, however quietly, privately, and dispassionately, these are true cases of the miracle.

The second respect in which this book differs from *Twice-Born Men* is in the character of the people whose stories it attempts to tell. In *Twice-Born Men* the testators were all men, and of the humblest classes in the community, some of them the very lees and dregs of society. In the present book most of the stories concern women, and in all cases the strata of society is above the depths.

# INTRODUCTION

*Il faut que la vie soit bonne afin qu'elle soit féconde.*

## I

ONE of the aphorisms in Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* is entitled, "The Characteristic Difference between the Discipline of the Ancient Philosophers and the Dispensation of the Gospel." To insist upon this Difference is to venture a rescue of Christianity, both from the shadows of philosophy and from the sensuous insecurity of æsthetics, which seems at this time more than ever a work of high urgency—a work to which all men may set their hands who believe that life without some form of definite religion is like to be a chaos, and without the true religion must certainly fall short of its reach.

This book attempts such a work, and one could not better express its purpose, or sound the note of its forerunning essay, than by setting forth in full, on the very threshold of its pages, the noble and compelling aphorism of Coleridge in which that characteristic of Christianity which

differentiates it from all philosophies and all other religions is most powerfully defined.

The Aphorism is as follows:

"By undeceiving, enlarging, and informing the Intellect, Philosophy sought to purify, and to elevate the Moral Character. Of course, those alone could receive the latter and incomparably greater benefit who by natural capacity and favourable contingencies of fortune were fit recipients of the former. How small the number, we scarcely need the evidence of history to assure us. Across the Night of Paganism, Philosophy flitted on, like itself, the lantern-fly of the tropics, a light to and an ornament, but alas! no more than an ornament, of the surrounding darkness.

"Christianity reversed the order. By means accessible to all, by inducements operative on all, and by convictions, the grounds and materials of which all men might find in themselves, her first step was to cleanse the *Heart*. But the benefit did not stop here. In preventing the rank vapours that steam up from the corrupt *Heart,* Christianity restores the Intellect likewise to its natural clearness. By relieving the mind from the distractions and importunities of the unruly passions, she improves the *quality* of the Understanding: while, at the same time, she presents for its contemplation Objects so great and so bright as cannot but enlarge the

organ by which they are contemplated. The fears, the hopes, the remembrances, the anticipations, the inward and outward experience, the belief and the Faith, of a Christian, form of themselves a philosophy and a sum of knowledge, which a life spent in the grove of Academus, or the 'painted porch,' could not have attained or collected. The result is contained in the fact of a wide and still widening Christendom.

"Yet I dare not say, that the effects have been proportionate to the divine wisdom of the Scheme. Too soon did the Doctors of the Church forget that the *Heart,* the *Moral* Nature, was the beginning and the end; and that Truth, Knowledge, and Insight were comprehended in its expansion. This was the first and true apostasy—when in Council and Synod the Divine Humanities of the Gospel gave way to speculative Systems, and Religion became a Science of Shadows under the name of Theology, or at best a bare Skeleton of Truth, without life or interest, alike inaccessible and unintelligible to the majority of Christians. For these, therefore, there remained only rites and ceremonies and spectacles, shows and semblances. Thus among the learned the substance of things hoped for (Heb. xi. 1) passed off into *Notions;* and for the unlearned the surfaces of things became substance. The Christian world was for cen-

turies divided into the Many, that did not think at all, and the Few who did nothing but think—both alike *unreflecting,* the one from defect of the *Act,* the other from the absence of an *Object.*"

## II

The purpose of this book is to show by the testimony of Christened souls that where the Christian religion makes it her first step to cleanse the heart, results follow which are evidence of her divine origin. And the object of this introduction is to insist that Christianity must be unwaveringly and authoritatively declared by its representatives to be a miracle-working religion, a religion able to cleanse the heart and convert the soul of even the most degraded human being, or its inevitable tendency will be towards the unprofitable region of speculation. There its light, which has for so long lightened the world, will surely flicker miserably away, for some generations at least, into the shadows and dispensable mysticism of an inadequate theology.

The supreme danger of the Christian religion comes not from outside, but from within. No attack of a merely unimaginative materialism could so undermine and totter this heavenly edifice as the inclination of those inside to sponge away from its interior walls the ancient testimony of a divine origin. Christianity is either

the first essential of life or it is a poor philosophy. It is either a Revelation or a Theory. It is either the Spirit of God or the dream of men. It is either superhuman, or a mere guess.

To make Christianity, as is the tendency in these present times, something so common and compromising that a man may get through the experience of human life almost as well without it as with it, to make it a bracket in religion with Hinduism, and a conjugation in philosophy with Platonism, not to insist upon it as something sole, single, and sublime, not to declare that it makes a unique demand and confers an exclusive benefit—this is most surely to darken the light of the world and to turn men shelterless again into the night of paganism. It is to destroy Christianity. Christianity, irresistible as a religion, is vulnerable at every point as a philosophy. Either it must be brought home to men as the express revelation of God, the chief necessity of existence, and a power unparalleled and supernatural, or it sinks fatally to the level of speculation, and becomes to the man of science a folly and to the bulk of humanity a matter of indifference.

## III

Christianity differs, with the altitude of heaven and the radius of infinity, from all other religions

under the sun, first and foremost in the nature of its foundational affirmation. It declares itself to be a revelation from God and (mark well) a blessing to humanity. All other religions are human explications. Buddha, Confucius, Lâo, Zoroaster and Mohammed, all these men stand in the same category as Socrates, Swedenborg, and Kant. They do not profess to be more than men. Their religions are human interpretations and explanations; they begin with the honest affirmation that they do but attempt to explain the moral and social problems of human life or to amplify the religion they found already in existence.

To the sick and dying soul of the human race Buddhism comes as a Job's comforter; Christianity as a healing physician. Buddhism diagnoses the disease and gives it a name; Christianity cures it. Buddhism explains why the patient should bear his sufferings and remain patient under his afflictions; Christianity commands him to take up his bed and walk. Buddhism explains everything, and leaves everything as it was before the explanation. Christianity sets out to explain nothing, and transfigures the whole fabric of existence.

All other religions are efforts, more or less beautiful, more or less intellectual, to find a way out from the world. Christianity is inwards to the world from the universe which includes the

world. It is not the speculation or inspiration of man, but a light from heaven, a hand from eternity, the voice of God. No religion save Christianity makes any such claim; no other religion has so daring an ascription. From the earth in which they have their roots, these shadow-faiths of groping men look up and strive to find their way amongst the stars; they ballast the soul with pessimism and wing it with arguments, and, thus prepared, send it a circuit of the empyrean; they guess their way across eternity and with a clue of Ariadne would circumnavigate infinity; their God is an intuition, their faith a fancy, and their law of life a conjecture.

Christianity's foundational affirmation is a supernatural origin. It is not a human presumption, but a divine revelation. It is a gift from God to man, and not a guess by man at God. The human brain is not concerned at all in the origin of this religion; it did not spring from the dreams of poets, the visions of prophets, the reasoning of philosophers. It came to humanity from outside humanity's history and experience. Christ declared Himself to be sanctified by the Father and sent into the world. "This commandment have I received of My Father" is an utterance unique in human records, and it is the ground-motive of all that luminous discourse which is the good-news and revelation of Christianity. St. Paul described himself to

men as "an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." St. Paul believed this, and those who heard him knew that he believed it;—"not of men, neither by man." A man may doubt or altogether reject the truth of Christianity, but he cannot deny either from its documents or from the course of history, that it claimed to be a divine and supernatural revelation. The cross of Calvary, set up in the centre of time, and dividing the ages of the world in twain, witnesses, if to nothing else, at least to this. "Christ did not die for a metaphor."

At the beginning, then, there is this immense gulf separating Christianity from all other religions. The origin of the one claims to be divine; the origins of the others do not profess to be anything but human. Other religions explain; Christianity reveals.

## IV

If men are disposed to forget or to slur the foundational affirmation of Christianity, much more do they obscure the central and unequivocal assurance of Christ that His revelation is a complete satisfaction of the soul, and the only secret of enduring joy.

That this is indeed the case may be seen vividly and amazingly in the disposition even of

able and devout Christians to establish a comparison between, and to seek a likeness in, Christianity and Buddhism. For these two religions "stand at diameter and sword's point." They are each the antipodes of the other. There is no antagonism to be discovered in nature or hit upon in the imagination, save only that one eternal antagonism between good and evil, more complete, contrary, and counter than the antithesis of these two religions.

Christianity is *janua vitae;* Buddhism, *janua mortis.* Christianity is an ardent enthusiasm for existence; Buddhism a painful yearning for annihilation. Christianity is a hunger and thirst after joy; Buddhism a chloral quest for insensibility. The Christian is bidden to turn away from sin that he may inherit the everlasting joy of eternity; the Buddhist is told to eradicate all desire of any kind whatsoever lest he be born again. Buddha sought to discover an escape from existence; Christ opened the door of life. Buddha forbade desire; Christ intensified aspiration. Buddha promised anæsthesia; Christ promised everlasting felicity.

By what blunder of the intellect can men have come to believe that a likeness exists in these two hostile attitudes of the soul towards its destiny? The reason is perhaps the fruitfullest cause of damage to the revelation of Christ. It is because, first Judaism, and then sacerdotalism

and extreme calvinism have succeeded in presenting Christ to Europe in precisely the same light as that in which Buddha stands, of his own choosing, to Asia,—namely, as the means of an escape from hereafter woe and not as the giver and bestower of joy, present and everlasting. "These words have I spoken unto you," said the Christ, "that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." The supreme glory of His revelation, that the Creator of the universe is the Father of men, cannot make for dejection and abasement, it must make for hope, confidence, and elation. "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden. . . . I am the Light of the World. . . . Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. . . . He that cometh unto Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst. . . . Rejoice and be exceeding glad. . . . Your sorrow shall be turned into joy. . . . I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. . . . He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. . . . Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Christianity is a sublime and supernatural optimism; there is no deeper and more exhaustive pessimism than the religion of Buddha. "Misery," says the ancient formula of the

Eastern religion, "always accompanies existence. All modes of existence result from desire. There is no escape from existence except by destruction of desire." Compare these propositions with the words, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

It must be noted, if only in passing, that Christ frequently insists upon immortality as a gift from God, not as something inherent in man's soul. Of those who believe in Him, He says: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." "Fear Him that hath power to destroy both soul and body." "Except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep My word he shall never see death." "Ye will not come to Me that ye may have life." Few people know that the immortality of the soul is a dogma of the Roman Church in the sixteenth century. "According to the first Christian idea, which was the true one," says Renan, "only those would rise again who had helped to establish the reign of God on the earth; the punishment of the wicked and frivolous would be extinction." "I know of no subject," says a French pastor, who believes that the Romish doctrine of eternal torment has almost destroyed Christianity in France, "on which the Bible is more explicit than on the destiny of the impenitent. It declares as plainly as possible that those who persist in

turning from God are on the way to eternal destruction." The *Encyclopædia Biblica* says of the heavenly Kingdom: "The righteous rise to share in it; but only the righteous: the resurrection is only to life . . . the resurrection is conceived as springing from God . . . the wicked have no part. . . . Only those, therefore, attain to the resurrection who 'are accounted worthy' to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead" (*Eschatology*, col. 1375). Only in the mouth of Satan does the Bible suggest a universal immortality—"Ye shall not surely die"; and never once does it employ the word "life" in describing the state of the iniquitous. Eternal joy is for those who desire it.[1]

Whether we believe in Universalism, Traditionalism, or a Conditional Immortality, certain and incontestable is the proposition that Christ made His revelation as a blessing, and claimed for Himself the position of a benefactor. "For life to be fruitful, life must be felt as a blessing." And yet it is this saving, blessing, joy-breathing,

[1] An interesting pamphlet on *l'immortalité facultative* is *Bible Immortality*, by H. G. Emeric de St. Dalmas, published by the Colston Press at Malvern; price sixpence. Professor Gerald Leighton in *The Greatest Life* (Duckworth) argues from a biological standpoint that "a soul is not born but made. It is no more born than mind is born. Both are acquired, even if we suppose they are independent."

and life-giving Christ Who has come to stand in men's minds chiefly and almost solely as a sorrowful saviour from eternal torment, an intensely tragic and pathetic mediator between a doomed humanity and the wrath of a violent God. Humanity has rejected this idea. The American who closed a discussion on eternal punishment with the amusing judgment, "Well, all I can say is that our people would never stand it!" spoke unknowingly for the healthy conscience and the clear reason of all the world. Bagehot's phrase about Satan's victory over mankind—"It is as if an army should invest a cottage"—is more than picturesque; it is final. The origin of evil, so far as human intelligence can comprehend it, is sufficiently explained by evolution. It is a phase in progressive creation. Mankind will not ascribe either folly or injustice to God. It is a mark of our potential divinity that we cannot worship a Monster or fawn to a Tyrant.

Both sacerdotalism and extreme calvinism are responsible for this false God. They have dreadfully degraded the idea of "Our Father which art in heaven," and sadly obscured the mission of the Christ whom He sanctified and sent into the world. How different, how attractive, how compelling, how infinitely more lofty and divine is the Father of Christ's parables and the Christ of the New Testament. He came to bring life and immortality to light. He came to give joy.

He came to bestow an immortality of unimagined wonder and delight. In proclaiming the Fatherhood of God He opened the gates of eternal bliss. With the words Love and Life upon His lips, He stands in the midst of the world offering an immortality of joy. When He turns to the sinner it is to promise an everlasting happiness for repentance. When He turns to the wicked it is to warn them of the unutterable loss of eternal life. There is nothing more and nothing less to be made out of the Christian documents. Christ came to manifest the Fatherhood of God and to declare His Will. The Fatherhood of God makes for security and for elation. To do His Will is to inherit everlasting happiness.

Christianity differs from all other religions in its superhuman origin and in its definite promise of life. Any form of religious zeal which does not make this essential differentiation the base of its labour and the spirit of its energy, must tend to bring Christianity into a fatal competition with the mere philosophies and theosophies of human pessimism, and thus destroy its power to cleanse the heart and thus limit its willingness to bestow immortal life. "For life to be fruitful, life must be felt as a blessing." [1]

[1] See Note A at end of book.

## V.

There is another respect in which Christanity is wholly different from other religions. It is a Faith which seeks disciples, a missionary and converting Faith, a Faith which despairs of no man, and is able to save the most abandoned and wretched victims of sin. You will look in vain among all the other religions of the world for missions to foreign nations and missions to the sinful and sorrowful. No other religion attempts to rescue the malefactor and the sensualist.

It is the attitude of Christianity to the sinner, a tender, solicitous and compassionate attitude, which more than anything else in its relation to mankind has struck the imagination of the world. The invective of Christ was for the traditionalism and formalism of His day; His tenderness and His love were for the weary and heavy-laden. "Ye will not come to Me that ye may have life." The attitude of Christianity to the sinner is the incomparable Fifteenth Chapter of St. Luke. Everything is said in the words, "But when he was yet a great way off his father saw him"; and the conclusion of the whole matter is in the words, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

Such a spirit exists in no religion conceived in the brain of man. Only in Christianity does the love of God beat down upon the sinful; only in Christianity does a Saviour stand at the door of the hardening heart; only in Christianity is it written, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Christianity, then, differs from all other religions, in its superhuman origin, in its definite promise of life, and in its attitude to sinners.[1]

## VI

Now, it is of no more avail merely to asseverate the divine origin of Christianity than it is to postulate a good and beneficent First Cause. Unless proofs of an incontestable and persuasive kind can be brought to the heart and understanding of men, proofs which make it impossible to deny the claim of Christ that He was sent into the world by a heavenly Father, mankind will persist in regarding Christianity only as one of many religions, only as one of many ancient superstitions, only as a philosophy which may or may not be a good guess at the truth of things, but which is certainly dispensable and non-essential.

Is it possible for Christianity to give these proofs?

[1] See Note B at end of book.

The body of this book is an answer to that question. The proofs of Christianity lie in the cleansed hearts and higher selves of that vast multitude which Christ has sought and saved. There can be no other proof, and no higher and more miraculous proof. Christianity does what it is declared by Christ able to do, and what no other religion and no arm of science can achieve. It is a power by which men can be born again. It is a power which transforms the sensualist, the criminal, the victim of alcoholic poisoning, the trivial, the mean, the self-righteous, the melancholy, the base, and the ignoble into souls worthy of eternal life. Wherever Christianity seeks the lost, it finds and it saves. Homes of wretchedness and misery become at its entrance microcosms of God. The chances and changes of this mortal life, the violence of the world's hostility, the whisperings and leadings of temptation, even the havoc and desolation of death, are borne by Christianity with fortitude and without despair. The earth ceases to be either insignificant or meaningless, life becomes definitely grand and beautiful, " the sacred passion of the second life " ennobles and exalts the soul, character and understanding enlarge themselves to the bounds of an infinite universe, and the spirit of man feels itself conscious of a capacity for everlasting growth in bliss, and conscious of a divine sonship with God.

The happiness, the peace, the purity, the wonder, and the hunger and thirst after immortality, of the cleansed heart—these are the proofs of Christianity.

## VII

"Yet I dare not say that the effects have been proportionate to the divine wisdom of the Scheme." The sweetest of English prose-writers uttered before Coleridge's day the lament, "That name and compellation of *Little Flock,* doth not comfort, but deject my Devotion." How can it be that a religion so rich in happiness and so overflowing with joy, has made but a slow progress through a world so weary and heavy-laden? Must it not be the fault of those whose mission it has been to set before men this priceless gift of heaven? The gift itself cannot be accused; the world, because it is so unhappy, cannot altogether be arraigned; there is only that company left for judgment to whom was given the command, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

"Clericalism," said Gambetta, "is the enemy." It is the enemy in a much wider and infinitely more disastrous sense than the mere patriot understood. It is the enemy of Christianity. The narrowest Calvinists have disgusted men with

God; the most foolish of sacerdotalists have made religion laughable. Extreme calvinism was too inhuman to succeed; sacerdotalism preys upon the weakness of human nature, and endures.

Unconsciously and with all mistaken zeal the enthusiasts for sacerdotalism have obscured the Light of the World and obstructed the Way, the Truth, and the Life. While they should have been seeking and saving the lost, they have been altering the fashions in church millinery and composing a new etiquette for the altar. While they should have been turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, they have been searching the musty service-books of mediævalism for "a new cringe." They are more concerned to get their Orders recognised by an Ecclesiasticism everywhere dying in Europe, even in Spain, than in bringing home to the soul of the world that a man must be born again before he can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not the Light of the World they make to shine before men, but a forbidden candle on a forsaken altar.

Sacerdotalism is *l'ensorcellement de la bagatelle.* It is a mental disease, an obsession, an *idée fixe,* which is as disfiguring to character and as fatal to grandeur of soul as the æstheticism of Oscar Wilde or the crotchet of Horace Walpole. "The conformation of his mind was such that whatever was little seemed to him

great, and whatever was great seemed to him little." The seriousness of this matter does not lie in the sacerdotalist's mistake of accounting little things great, but in his insistent, pertinacious, and corner-creeping [1] assertion that great things are little. "What must God be," asked George Grove, "if He is pleased by things which simply displease his educated creatures!" It is by *this* mistake, all down the ages, this belittling of God and disfiguring of Christ, that masses of men have come to entertain petty notions of existence, have ceased to think of Christ even with admiration, and have grown at last indifferent to immortality.

"This was the first and true apostasy—when in Council and Synod the Divine Humanities of the Gospel gave way to speculative Systems, and Religion became a Science of Shadows . . . without life or interest, alike inaccessible and unintelligible to the majority of Christians. For these, therefore, there remained only rites and ceremonies and spectacles, shows and semblances."

"I cannot but think," writes an earnest and devout Churchman, "that if there be one thing of which the world to-day stands in more imperative need than of any other, it is the revolt

[1] "Agents of conversion to the Romish Church, *corner-creepers* as they were called, penetrated everywhere."—M. Arnold. *Mixed Essays.*

of 'the Church'—*i.e.*, of 'the blessed company of all believing people'—and especially of the thinking and seeing lay-element, against every form of *mere* Clericalism. I do not, of course, mean any narrow or petty revolt, or anything that has in it the least strain of that very 'grooviness' which has for so many centuries dominated the clerical mind, but just that great life-giving, energising Spirit of God, asserting Himself over and above human dogma." The call of St. Paul to the Churches in Galatia, where the Christian idea was in danger of a reversion to sacerdotalism, is the call of our own day threatened by a like calamity—"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

One is as anxious for the sacerdotalist to realise that a new era of Christianity is at hand, as one is solicitous to convert irreligious mankind to the true character and mission of Christ. "The prophet and the priest," says Mr. Andrew Macphail, "are inevitable enemies, and yet without the priest the prophet ends as a voice crying in the wilderness"—not always perhaps, but certainly one must desire to have the engine of the Church on the side of the true Christ, not only to prevent it from the frightful work of misrepresenting the glory and the power of God, but to gain the active co-operation of its saints.—I

have written hoping to destroy in some men's minds *l'ensorcellement de la bagatelle,* to awaken them to the attractiveness of a nobler Christianity, and to give them, if it be possible, from a few brief but touching and miraculous narratives, an enthusiasm for the true mission and the real vocation of a Christian.

As there can be no comparison of Buddhism with Christianity, so can there be no comparison between establishing a dogma, however true, or holding a set of opinions, however rational, and saving the souls of men. By saving men individually the Church saves Society, and by saving Society she brings millennium. It is in the power of Christianity—and in the power of no other religion or agency under heaven—to redeem humanity, to dignify human life, and to bring the whole world into the joy and apprehension of the God in knowledge of Whom standeth our eternal life. Is it not a sublime and glorious destiny to which the human race is called by the Light of the World?—and is it not manifest that humanity will only respond to that call when those who profess and call themselves Christians so reflect the Light of the World in their happiness, their serenity, and their holiness, that they appear as a city set on an hill, different from all other men, separate from all schools and sects, and so attractive and compelling that the world outside the radius of their

joy is felt to be a darkness, an isolation, and a death?

. . . . .

What is to be the attitude of the Church towards the modern spirit of unrest everywhere manifesting itself in civilisation? It is not democracy alone which is restless; every section and class of the social organism is conscious of dissatisfaction and aware of a dragging of anchors and a movement from ancient moorings; the unrest is not material, it is spiritual,—its origin is in the soul of man. What is it that the Church has to say to a generation which has outgrown the moods and passions of the past, which is sceptical of history, distrustful of authority, and contemptuous of superstition,—a generation which is not in the least interested in sectarian conflict, which is no longer beguiled by the ingenuities of the casuist, and which has ceased to believe either in a sudden heaven or a sudden hell?

It is surely unwise to deny to the Christian revelation the properties of growth, development, and evolution, to go back to the past for finality, and to make of Tradition the one steadfast and unchanging Fact of a universe constantly in flux. There is a Spirit which guides men into Truth, and it is certain that religion must move and enlarge its concepts with that central progress of humanity towards a less partial understanding

of cosmic reality. What is it, then, that an evolving Church has to say to a generation full of unrest because it desires to believe and does not know what to believe? Has she one voice, or many voices? Does she truly feel herself adequate to the world's unrest?

Let her first of all be rid of insolence in Authority and dissidence in Dissent. And then let her tear up the old documents of sectarian puerilities, and recognise the Christlessness of bitterness and animosity. The Church has something to say, but much more to do. Her words must always be human; her actions can be divine. She has overtalked herself; it is time she made herself the leaven of humanity. Nothing is of so much moment as *character;* not what we can express in words as to that which we believe is of value, but rather, how surely and attractively we reflect in the tone of our character and the manner of our living the unselfishness, the beauty, and the calm of Christ. Let us know for very certain that the measure of our Christianity is the measure of our power in this world to attract the unhappy, heal the sick, and raise the dead. We are philosophers when we confute; we are Christians when we persuade and attract.

The Church must save sinners, and, rejoicing in the gift of life, must make herself felt as a blessing to humanity. She can only hope truly to represent the Christ when she has possessed

herself of the primitive enthusiasm for a revelation, and has grasped the meaning of the divine words: "I am come that they might have Life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The Church must be felt as a blessing; she must attract; she must save before she can be triumphant.

Let her, then, bid farewell to a morbid abasement and a repelling pessimism: to the shadows of philosophy and the semblance of æstheticism; to all that is dark and forbidding; to all that is unreal and transitory; to all that is artificial and sentimental; to all that is trivial and unworthy; and let her manifest to the world shining joy, unclouded serenity, everlasting aspiration, the attraction of beauty and the power to save.

"For life to be fruitful, life must be felt as a blessing."

> Not for these sad issues
> Was Man created; but to obey the law
> Of life, and hope, and action. And 'tis known
> That when we stand upon our native soil,
> Unelbowed by such objects as oppress
> Our active powers, those powers themselves become
> Strong to subvert our noxious qualities.
> They sweep distemper from the busy day,
> And make the chalice of the big round year
> Run o'er with gladness: whence the Being moves
> In beauty through the world; and all who see
> Bless him, rejoicing in his neighbourhood.

## SEEKERS AND SAVERS

"Doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by action."

A COMMUNITY of men and women, pledged to make the ideas of Chist prevail in Central London, pledged to exalt the character of Christ in the midst of London's streaming roar, and pledged to minister, in the name of Christ, to the sorrowful and suffering at the heart of the metropolis, meets every Sunday in the Lyceum Theatre, where once the genius of a great actor attracted all mankind.

This community, which had its first inspiration in the wonderful work of the Salvation Army, and which came into existence through the burning enthusiasm of Hugh Price Hughes, calls itself the West London Mission. Its central impulse is the conviction that Christianity is a missionary religion. It believes that formalism is dangerous to the spirit of that religion. It holds that the multitude has still to be sought, wooed, and compelled; that the conscience of humanity has still to be awakened and the heart of humanity still to be converted; that Central London stands in as great need of missionaries, disciples, and apostles as the farthermost dark-

ness of a savage heathendom. Above and beyond everything else, it is a mission. Not one of the devoted men and women who form this community but feels deep in the heart the call of the disciple and the commission of the apostle. They are all seekers and savers. This was the great aspiration of that man, both great and good—Hugh Price Hughes—to have an army in the centre of London never on a peace footing, never abandoned to mere festivities, and never enervated and fatigued by monotonous drills and wearisome exercises, but an army ever at war against all that is vile, base, and degrading, an army ever exhilarated by the zest of conflict and forcible with the hardihood of active service, an army whose battle-song should be no morbid whine after individual mercy, but the glorious song of William Blake:—

> I will not cease from mental fight,
> Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
> Till we have built Jerusalem
> In England's green and pleasant land.

It is to a community such as the West London Mission that the inquirer must go if he would really understand the place and power of Christianity in the destinies of the human race. The formalist cannot help him; nay, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the formalist does not at all represent the religion of Christ, but does

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most lamentably and disastrously misrepresent that incommunicable feeling and aspiring worship of the soul. "His religion has been made for him by others, communicated to him by tradition, determined to fixed forms by imitation, and retained by habit. . . . Churches when once established live at second-hand upon tradition." A Buddhist or a Mohammedan could get no true notion of the Christian religion by spending his whole life in the cathedrals and churches of Europe. Nor, if he gave himself up to a study of mass-books, catechisms, prayer-books, hymnologies, controversial theologies and missals of mysticism, would he ever arrive at the heart and soul of this religion. For the heart and soul of Christianity is Action.

"Conviction," says Teufelsdröckh, "were it never so excellent, is worthless till it convert itself into Conduct. Nay, properly, Conviction is not possible till then; inasmuch as all Speculation is by nature endless, formless, a vortex amid vortices:[1] only by a felt indubitable certainty of Experience does it find any centre to revolve round, and so fashion itself into a system. Most true is it, as a wise man teaches us, that

[1] "Controversies are never determined; for though they be amply proposed, they are scarce at all handled, they do so swell with unnecessary Digressions; and the Parenthesis on the party, is often as large as the main discourse upon the subject."—*Religio Medici.*

'Doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by Action.' On which ground, too, let him who gropes painfully in darkness or uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen into day, lay this other precept well to heart . . . '*Do the Duty which lies nearest thee,*' which thou knowest to be a Duty! Thy second Duty will already have become clearer."

The hour of Spiritual Enfranchisement, he declares, is even this: "When your Ideal World, wherein the whole man has been dimly struggling and inexpressibly languishing to work, becomes revealed and thrown open; and you discover, with amazement enough, . . . that your 'America is here or nowhere.'"

Among the men and women composing the West London Mission you find a common centre of Action, a point round which revolves the resistless energy and the driving enthusiasm of souls visited by "a felt indubitable certainty of Experience." They are souls in action. The vestments of ecclesiasticism become in their hands "bandages for the bleeding wounds of humanity." The ropes of the belfry-tower become in their hands cords of brotherhood. The hours of a formal, monotonous, mechanical, and selfish devotion become in their lives the swift and glorious minutes of open conflict with sin and misery. They are not kneeling in churches, but declaring what we call the good news of Christ

in the streets of the city and in the homes of men. It is their business, not to stand waiting for a congregation, but to go into the highways and byways compelling men to come in. Convinced that a soul isolated from God is a dead soul, convinced that without the hope, love, and sweetness of Christ no life can emerge into the true light of existence, and convinced that men can only be won to a longing after God and a realisation of the grandeur of immortality, by a Christ-inspired love and a Christ-inspired devotion—they make of their religion a life of service, and are seekers and savers, ministers and apostles, the hounds of heaven and the hands of God.

See the difference between a Theology and a Mission. Theology makes religion difficult. Scarcely a lifetime of profoundest study suffices for a knowledge of this science. A plain man in controversy with a professional theologian is made to feel an abysmal ignorance. He concludes that religion is something apart from common life, a matter as high and abstruse as mathematics or chemistry, a thing of the study, a thing of long words and interminable volumes. An ecclesiasticism founded upon this science of theology (all theologians at variance with one another, and theology changing its dialect with every decade) becomes aloof from the daily life of toiling men. It may be subscribed to by those

who cannot think for themselves and by those who feel themselves lame and lost without the crutch of tradition and the leading hand of authority; but it can never awaken the enthusiasm of democracy, it can never create the soul of religion in the homes of the nations.

On the other hand, a Mission makes religion not only easy to be understood, but so visibly beautiful and divine that it becomes even in the eyes of the simple and the ignorant a thing greatly to be desired, a blessing to be received at whatever cost. A Mission deals with life. It goes among men and women and speaks of those things which touch the actual existence of men and women. It deals with the heart of humanity, with its cares and sorrows, its temptations and weaknesses, its dejections and wretchedness, its hopes and fears, its pain and anguish, its dulness and monotony, its poverty and destitution, its toil, disappointments, solitude, and inward silence. It is at home with mankind. It is close to the bosom of mortality. It knows how hard is the way of life for the multitude, how impossible for any to escape tragedy, how easy for the best to fall, how very difficult, but how very possible, for the worst to climb. Its consolation is uttered with no misgiving, and its hope shines in its eyes with the conviction of "a felt indubitable certainty of Experience." It knows. It is sure. For all weakness, there is strength; for all grief, there is

comfort; for all monotony, there is joy; for all anguish, there is peace; for all mourning and lamentation, there is hope. Christ is the Secret. In Him the most fallen has both a Saviour and a Lover. To Him the most hopeless and despairing may raise eyes certain of blessing. With Him the weakest may walk in security and strength.

Simplicity—an absolute and a most commending simplicity—is the keynote of this ministration. We have a Father in Heaven. Christ came into the world to manifest the love of this Father and to attract all men to the highest life by the beauty of His character, the sweet reasonableness of His wisdom, and by the revelation of His resurrection from the dead. Religion is based upon love of God, faith in Christ, and hope of immortality. Its expression is service to humanity.

Here there is no room for the disputations and intricacies of theology, leading nowhither. The appeal is made direct to the heart. Its language is composed from the alphabet of experience. Its logic is the knowledge of common men.

And, note well, the chief commendation of this active Christianity is its ministration. Those who seek and save commend religion in the very fact that they do seek and save. Instead of weighing theological arguments, the common man and the common woman feel themselves touched by the

kindness of those who seek them, and drawn out of themselves by the magnetised sympathy and sweetness of those who save them. Religion becomes attractive. It ceases to be a speculation. Before their very eyes men and women see Christianity incarnate and beautiful in human form. It is a reality. It is actual. The thing is there, in the flesh, breathing and living, regarding them with eyes of divine kindness, entreating them with words of purest love, holding out to them hands of the strongest and most unselfish helpfulness. They do not have to decide with their reasons whether this or that form of words is right; but with their hearts, open to all the divinest influences acting upon human nature, they have to say whether this kind, helpful, and ministering thing called Christian Religion is beautiful, and good, and true.

To have in the centre of London, at the very heart of the British people, an army for God that never rests from its conflict with evil and never ceases to pursue the unhappy with the love of Christ, was the ambition and the ideal of Hugh Price Hughes. He brought such an army into existence by the same force of personality which in General Booth brought the Salvation Army into existence; he commanded this army throughout his life with brilliant skill and unsleeping enthusiasm; and now that he has passed through the darkness which holds Eternity

from our human gaze, the army is still fighting and still pursuing, still proving that Christianity in action is a living thing, still touching life at the centre of the metropolis with the grace of the Spirit and the beauty of love.

In the pages which follow I endeavour to reveal in the region of narrative something of the magic work accomplished by this Mission. The stories compose a human document of immense significance to religion, to politics, and to medical science. No man of free judgment and honest thought can read these histories without acknowledging the sovran force of religion in the life of an individual. They prove what I ventured to assert in *Twice-Born Men*, that religion is the only known agent whereby a man radically bad can become radically good. They demonstrate that where Christianity sets itself to change the heart, results follow which are impossible to science. In a word, they introduce us to the miracle.

But it is important for the reader to bear in mind during his persual of these narratives that the work of the West London Mission is by no means fully exhibited in my chronicles of conversion. There is a vast field of activity covered by this community into which I have not penetrated for the purpose of my book. It will serve to show the energy of Christianity in action if I give in this place some brief account of that

activity, some faintest adumbration of the labours which are carried on by this Mission in its crusade against the dangers, temptations, and iniquities of Central London; and it will prevent the reader from concluding that the energies of the Mission are directed into only one channel and that my narratives of conversion represent the total character of its victories.

The heart of this community are the Sunday services in the Lyceum Theatre. Not only does the blood of activity beat from this heart and pulsate throughout all the districts of middle London where the Mission is at work, but the congregations of three and four thousand people typify the nature and the spirit of the whole community. It is a community built upon the sense of brotherhood, freed from the formalism of a caste religion, and inspired by a greater yearning for realism than by a dull obedience to traditionalism. The services are an expression of enthusiasm. There is an excellent orchestra and a trained choir of male voices. The note of the worship is one of triumph. You cannot imagine how great is the difference between the old, dull, miserable monotony of formalism, and the brightness and joy and contagious hopefulness of these services in a theatre, these crowded services of hope, confidence, and victory.

Look at the congregation, and you will see how wide is the appeal made by this crusading Mission.

People of every class and degree fill the theatre from floor to ceiling. It is as if a net had been dipped down into the centre of London and had tumbled streets-full of its cosmopolitan population into this Sunday theatre. You can see rich and poor, soldiers and sailors, policemen and postmen, merchants and lawyers, shopmen and clerks, typists and milliners, workmen and labourers. It is a microcosm, like the secular theatre; a gathering together of all classes into one including place—society dividing itself into boxes, stalls, circles, gallery, and pit; all the world a stage, and all the stage a theatre.

The man who conducts these strange services and draws these immense congregations is an interesting type of the new preacher of Christianity. When I first visited the Lyceum services, some year or two ago, I judged him to be hard, precise, lawyer-like—a man who arranged his arguments too mechanically, uttered them too harshly and loudly, used gestures too angrily, and gave one the impression of a solicitor justifying an absentee God in the police-court of an unimaginative middle-class. It was a surprise to me when I made his acquaintance to find that he was a young man, a man of quietest voice and gentlest manner, a thoughtful reader, a spiritual thinker, and the very last man in the world to beat a drum or thump a tub. I misjudged him, I think, because distance gave me a quite false

idea of his appearance, and because the vigour and energy of his preaching on that occasion made a cloud of dust about the true nature of his spirit.

Mr. Ernest Rattenbury, this preacher of the Lyceum, is a man conscious of world-movements, alive to the progress of ideas, enthusiastic for social reform, impatient of injustice and abuse, and firm fixed in the faith that the centre of human life is the Incarnation and that without conversion to Christ the soul of humanity must go astray and grope in the everlasting darkness of chaos and anarchy. To hear what he has to say thousands of people flock every Sunday to the Lyceum; and to do what he asks them hundreds of people go from the Lyceum into the streets of London with renewed confidence and invigorated strength. He takes the old texts, uses sometimes the ancient phraseology, and seldom, so far as my experience goes, attempts a restatement of the Christian thesis; but his utterances are marked by original thought, the spirit is fresh and interesting, and he makes religion a real thing, touching the lives of men and women, moulding the destiny of the nation, and uniting London with Heaven.

He stands for thinker and inspirer of the Mission, its Voice in the centre of London, its cry to the people of the great city. And in some way, and that a most important way, he is also

a part of the Mission's activity. He not only inspires the workers of the Mission in their superb and selfless labour in the streets, he not only witnesses to the presence of the Mission in Central London, but in his preaching he also seeks and saves. There are men and women every week in those vast congregations at the Lyceum who are unknown to the workers, and who perhaps never join the Mission at all. Some of them write to the preacher, some of them call and see him. They represent almost every class and condition in London. They are seekers and inquirers.

The strangeness of a religious service in a theatre has perhaps been their only impulse to the Lyceum. The utterance of the preacher has revived their purest memories or held a dreadful mirror to their consciences. They write to him either to ask for advice or to thank him for a new life. Some of them come and see him and tell him stories which have caused him to say that the London sinner is the most interesting of all sinners. In this way does the preacher seek and save. His sermons are not only an inspiration to the workers and members of the Mission, they are nets for the souls of men.

A very large body of the congregation is drawn from the warehouses and shops and offices of London. The reader will find some account of these people in the narratives which follow; but

it is important to insist in this place upon the beneficent work of the West London Mission as it affects the lives of this very important and exposed section of London society. Indeed, although the rescue work of the Mission appeals more dramatically and poignantly to one's sympathy, I doubt if any part of its activity is more useful to the community and more serviceable to the cause of religion than this quiet, unpicturesque, and almost commonplace devotion to the shopman and clerk.

Many infidel critics of *Twice-Born Men* endeavoured to make light of the stories it narrated in a general scorn and contempt for the Salvation Army. One of the journals of infidelity has recently attacked me as—if I remember rightly—a fatuous person who writes about what he does not understand and who would make Salvationists of all mankind. The truth is, however fatuous I may be, that I would make Salvationists of those who can best express themselves only in that way, Methodists of those who can reach their highest only by becoming Methodists, and Infidels of no creature under God's sun, neither the ox nor the ass, neither the pig nor the peacock, neither the gnat nor the microbe—because in infidelity there is the abyss and not the height, darkness and not light, nothingness and not the all-in-all. The object of religion is to find expression for the noblest

aspirations and the highest powers of a man, and whatsoever the form by which this enfranchisement of the soul is attained, it matters not whether it is æsthetically the best or socially the most aristocratic. To make a man a good man is the heart of history and the soul of evolution; and as in man there is an infinite diversity of temperament, so we must look for an infinite expression of the religious solicitude for human salvation. But what I desire to say chiefly to the infidel critic of *Twice-Born Men* touches upon this subject of the West London Mission's work among the shopmen and clerks of London.

Is it a good thing, or is it a bad thing, that an influence making for honesty, purity, and culture should be at work among young men and young women, the circumstances of whose employment expose them constantly and relentlessly to the temptations of dishonesty, impurity, and the most vulgar forms of hedonism? Is it better that these young people, coming into the glare and excitement of London from the monotony of a provincial town, should be cared for morally and spiritually, or that they should be left to take their chance in a rabble of the ugliest materialism that ever degraded the human race? If my critic reply that they must take their chance, I have nothing more to say to him; I must leave him to an individualism which is reproached with inconsistency by every police-

man and school inspector he encounters in the streets of his city. And if he reply that they should certainly be cared for and safeguarded, I ask him whether he can name any agency in civilisation which can better guard and befriend innocence than the agency of religion. And if he parry the question with millennial references to the influence of culture, ethics, and free libraries, I ask him this—But when a man has fallen from innocence, when the pilgrim has become the prodigal, and the fighter the defeated, what power, what agency, what aid of civilisation and ethics can raise him up, restore his manhood, and impel him towards righteousness? And the woman who falls!—will culture give her palingenesis, will ethics lift her up, is there anything in civilisation that can give her the sense of being cleansed, saved, and sanctified?

But infidelity is in truth a form of madness; it is an obsession which argument cannot oust nor ridicule destroy; one wastes time in commending religion to a man whose mind is made up that organisation is cause and not consequence of life, that the beauty and majesty of the universe are accidents, and that a fall of meteoric dust to our cooling globe produced the scent of the rose, the song of the lark, the leaves of the birch, the speed of the horse, the strength of the lion, and the soul of Shakespeare.

I have only referred to the infidel, that the more imaginative reader may see strikingly the point which I desire to make concerning the work of this Mission among the population of business houses. Consider how exposed to temptation of a most pressing and insistent kind are these young men and young girls who come up from the provinces to make their living in London. They see everywhere frivolity, gaiety, carelessness, and vice in its finest clothes. They are tempted to think that they themselves are narrow, straight-laced, puritanical, and provincial. They are tempted to feel in themselves a galling sense of inferiority. They find themselves surrounded by those who began as they did and who have become one of the crowd. They listen to conversations which amaze them; they behold sights which fill them with astonishment. They are subjected to rallying ridicule and the stinging chaff of a worldliness which appears manful. They cannot walk in the streets without the sensation of a most tempting iniquity.

In one of Mr. Rattenbury's sermons he addressed himself to the young man tempted by London to forget the purity of his home memories and to slough the principles which guided his life before he came to the metropolis. His text was, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me"; and he spoke of David's agonising realisation that it was better to bear the undying bitterness of

remorse for a dreadful and unpardonable sin than to become hardened, indifferent, and soulless—"Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." This was his appeal:—

"I want to ask you, Do you struggle as you once did? Are you lowering your ideals? Do you acquiesce with the evil you once fought against? Young man, when you came to London a year or two ago, you used to blush when you heard certain things—you laugh now. That is death. It means the sensitiveness of the soul has become dulled, and the things that once shocked you, amuse you. Young man, when you came here you protested against the things that seemed to you to be unjust and immoral and mean amongst the people with whom you worked; you made up your mind *you* would not soil your conscience, you would rather lose your situation. Are your ideals lower? It is just as you lower those ideals that the soul shrinks and mortification sets in. Young man, you had high and lofty ideals of service; you said you would not live for yourself, you would not tolerate a merely selfish life. Are you living for others to-day? Has the flag been lowered? Has the ideal been lowered?"

Is it a good thing or is it a bad thing, is it a highly useful and most essential thing or a matter of mere indifference, that there should be in the centre of London this influence for right conduct and pure thinking on one of the largest sections of the community? Is it a good thing that a clerk should be honest, sober, clean-living, and morally helpful to society? Is it a good thing that a shop-girl should be virtuous, pure, and ambitious of a sanctified maternity? Or does it

not matter at all what they are?—would it be just as well with London if the influence of religion were entirely removed and the whole community were given over to dissipation, self-assertion, and a reckless animalism?

Most important, I think, is this particular sphere of the West London Mission's activity; and if it existed alone for this purpose, it would deserve the earnest support of all serious and reflecting people. But, after all, this is but one expression of the Mission's energy. It sends a Sister to walk the midnight streets of Piccadilly and Regent Street—the kindest, purest, sweetest, and yet the most practical and unsentimental of women—who has saved hundreds of wretched girls from the most abysmal depths of degradation. It sends preachers to state the truth of Christianity against the infidel lecturers in Hyde Park. It has a Sisterhood which concerns itself with vigilance work and temperance work. It has a hospital for the dying poor, a *crèche* for the children of toiling mothers, a home for rescued women. It has a guild for helping cripples, a labour bureau for the unemployed, and a society for promoting thrift. It has clubs and institutes and classes for men and boys, women and girls. It has a body of trained nurses who tend the sick in their own homes, solicitors who give advice to poor people, missioners, both men and women, who hold religious services in the open streets,

and Sisters who visit the work-houses, the lodging-houses, and the cellars and garrets of appalling slums. In a word, nothing that love can do and religion inspire for the sorrowful and sinful, the hard of heart, and the destitute poor is left undone by this little community of Christian souls.

There is room enough in London, Heaven knows, for Churches, Chapels, Salvation Armies, and Missions; there can never be too many people inspired by enthusiasm for the Character and Idea of Christ working on the side of sweetness and light, righteousness and grandeur in the frightful mass and hideous congestion of the great city. Men whom the Bishop of London cannot reach are saved by General Booth; men whom General Booth cannot reach are saved by the Bishop of London; and the Bishop of London, General Booth, Ernest Rattenbury, and all other genuine, true-ringing, and fierce-working seekers and savers belong to one Master, whom it is the business of humanity to serve rather than define, to love rather than to quarrel over. The just man will not separate the various agencies for good in London, and differentiate between them as to their methods and forms; he will give his sympathy and his support to every awake and enthusiastic society which is making for righteousness at the heart of the British Empire.

All these societies, but the West London Mis-

sion in particular, are confronted by one most insidious and deadly form of opposition.

The great obstacle in their path is the mountainous luxury and ostentation of central London, which at every point obstructs their progress and hinders their conquest.

On this subject it is necessary to say a few words, with which one may appropriately close this brief description of mission work in the metropolis of civilisation.

In *The Soul of a Christian,* Professor Granger says some disparaging things about the excitement and contagious hysteria of revival meetings. The methods of the revivalist, he declares, "are cleverly calculated to throw the soul off its balance and to seize it in its moment of humiliating weakness. There is an unholy art of forcing the pace of the soul as it draws near to God; for which purpose it is necessary to produce that unnatural excitement in which the soul is at the mercy of the passing impulse. . . . This exaggerated excitability which is characteristic of neurasthenia, is therefore closely associated with that loss of complete control which is found to be an essential element in all hypnotic phenomena. . . . These strange accompaniments of religious fervour seem partly original, springing from over-excitement and hysteria; partly imitative, the report of such things tending in some minds to suggest imitation. . . . This latter form of

excitement (when human beings are assembled in a crowd) may be traced under the heads of contagion of feeling and hypnotic suggestion. . . . The presence of a large number of human beings together in one place produces certain physical effects, among which is a certain tendency to receive suggestions."

Now it is easy enough for a critic of religious fervour and missionary zeal to suggest that the methods of the revivalist are "cleverly calculated," and that a contagion of feeling is responsible for excitement, and that excitement produces the hysteria of spiritual upheaval. The same critic, however, if he attended a street-corner service in Drury Lane, held opposite a tavern and in the midst of the depression of a disgustful destitution, would certainly find it difficult to create an atmosphere of any excitement or enthusiasm. But what he says is no doubt generally true of certain revival meetings, and might as truly be applied to political meetings, or any other gathering of men where the feelings are deeply stirred. There is, unquestionably, *a contagion of feeling and hypnotic suggestion.* But it is not confined to particular assemblages of men.

It is a matter of the first magnitude to recognise that the tone of social life, the standard of public opinion, the quality of manners, the set and tide of national existence, even the amuse-

ments, diversions, and fashions of society, spread a contagion of feeling and induce an hypnotic suggestion. There is a contagion of Regent Street and an hypnotic suggestion of Hyde Park. One is conscious of a contagion in London which is quite different from the contagion of a country garden; the soul cannot feel itself in the same attitude towards God in the one place as in the other: there is a different atmosphere, a different contagion, a different suggestion. Therefore when the man of the world says that spiritual upheaval is produced by the emotional atmosphere of a religious meeting, the religious may retort upon him that his own spiritual deadness is produced by the contagion of feeling and hypnotic suggestion of the godless, unimaginative, and vulgar hedonism which surrounds him. But it is not to retaliate upon the critic of religious fervour that I insist upon this contagion of feeling and hypnotic suggestion everywhere acting upon the souls of men; it is to emphasise the solemn responsibility of the individual to the community, to show the necessity for a reformation of social life, and to point out how difficult and hard is the work of the Christian missionary in London, surrounded as he is on every side by the luxury and ostentation of a voluptuous plutocracy.

No man can truly say that the contagion of society is a religious contagion, or that the hyp-

notic suggestion of London streets is a religious suggestion. A visitor to England from India or China, whose purpose was to study the followers of the Son of God at the centre of their national life, would surely feel himself, in the streets of London, to be the victim of an immense hallucination. It would be impossible for him to believe that London in any way expressed the mind of Christ; it would not be impossible for him to think that it represented the ideas of a nation devoted to Baal or Astarte. He would see on every side of him an ostentation of wealth bewildering in its profusion and staggering in its effrontery. He would find it impossible to distinguish the lady of fashion from the public women of the streets. He would see in the shop-windows the manifold productions of a commerce created by vanity, voluptuousness, and sensuality. The hoardings would shock his modesty by their prurience, or disgust his intellect by their vulgarity. He would feel himself to be the witness of a carousal. It would seem to him that every unit in the multitude was dressed to attract attention, was bent upon self-indulgence, had no purpose in life save dissipation, acknowledged no responsibility towards his fellow-men, lived without a thought of God—his, or anybody's. He would look for self-sacrifice, and he would see self-assertion; for modesty, and he would see immodesty; for humility, and he would

see arrogance; for gentleness, and he would see audacity; for meekness, and he would see vanity; for reticence, and he would see effrontery; for service, and he would see idleness. Instead of the Christian he would see the Sybarite; instead of the disciples, the swine of Epicurus; instead of sisters of mercy, the daughters of Messalina. It is impossible to exaggerate the effect of London's central streets upon the mind of such a man.

It is in such an environment, exposed to its contagion and suggestion, that the people live whom the West London Mission seeks to save. On every side of them is the parade and display of wealth. They see with their eyes and feel with their souls the allurements and enticements of luxurious existence. Any such ideal as Christianity must seem to them a phantasy—so real, visible, tangible, and prosperous is the presence of Mammon. There is nowhere a reproach for the vain, a rebuke for the vulgar, a condemnation for the selfish. The pageant of worldliness passes continually before their eyes in unbroken triumph. Life is there. To be rich is the supreme blessing. Every one is seeking a single goal—a material enjoyment of existence, an assertion of self.

Now, this hypnotic suggestion of the streets, this "contagion of the world's slow stain" is infinitely more potent for evil than the sugges-

tion and contagion of a religious meeting for hysteria. It is normal. It is perpetual. It is a form of suggestion so subtle and disguised, it appears so natural and commonplace, that no psychologist takes the trouble to diagnose it, and no religious teacher feels himself moved to denounce it. Indeed, it passes not only unchallenged, but undetected. It is not recognised as hypnotic suggestion. And yet there is in the world no contagion more undoubtedly the work of suggestion, and no hypnotic suggestion which makes more disastrously for vulgarity of mind, corruption of taste, compromising morality, and deadness of soul, than this normal, usual, and ubiquitous influence of the public streets.

This miasma of London is made by the thoughts of the units composing its multitude. The moral atmosphere of a place is produced by the soliloquies of the soul. It is not the diverse purposes, but the diverse thoughts of men which make the difference in the atmosphere of church and tavern. A flourishing tavern in the prosperous quarter of the town has a quite different atmosphere from the beershop of miserable wretches in the slums; a fashionable church possesses an atmosphere wholly different from that of a little country church where worship is sincere and religion is truly felt to be "the poetry of the heart." Enter any of these buildings, churches, or taverns, when they are empty, and

the atmosphere of each is identical. Are we not conscious of a different air in the same church at Communion, at morning prayer, at even-song, at a funeral?

Every individual is in some way responsible for the hypnotic suggestion of the streets. A woman may be perfectly virtuous, and yet by the vanity of her mind, expressing itself in her garments, may intensify the hypnotic suggestion of sensuality. One cannot oppose the contagion of feeling in London, unless the soul is definitely pure. Unless one is definitely pure it is quite possible to convey the idea of impurity.[1] Therefore it is a solemn duty for those who desire to be on the side of beauty, nobility, righteousness, and spirituality to see that in no chamber of their thoughts, in no fashion of their garments, in no department of their manners do they contribute any power to the general atmosphere of materialism. There is great need for a clean division between good and evil. It is not an exaggeration to say that unselfishness makes no effect on the London streets. Decency does, respectability does, and in a certain degree courtesy does; but the great note of Christianity —selflessness—makes no sound in the symphony

[1] "The power of evil may be exercised by simple indolence and negligence, while the good can only be accomplished by some amount of exertion and sacrifice."—Connop Thirlwall.

of the public streets. Is it a great thing to expect that every man and woman in London whose life has been touched and exalted by the Character of Christ should by the simplicity of their dress, the beauty of their manners, and the nobility of their pursuits, convey an impression to the streets which is at once a reproach to vanity and an invitation to holiness?

Certain it is that the present wholesale materialism of society makes an atmosphere of central London in which it is hard, very hard indeed, for the apostles of Christ to do their work. If more people with means and leisure could be seen helping the sad and saving the lost; if instead of one Sister on the midnight streets there were hundreds of good women pleading with the fallen; if at every turn and corner one found the doors of houses and institutions thrown open for the work of Christ; if—not now and then, but continually—there was a universal hospitality practised by the rich towards the poor, a universal effort on the part of rich men to help poor men, and rich women to help poor women; if, in brief, wherever one went in central London one saw, as one sees a city set on a hill, the life-work of a vast multitude consecrated to the service of Christ—how infinitely easier it would be to combat materialism, to destroy vulgarity, and to attract the sad and sorrowful to religion.

Is it not high time that the Church awoke to the tremendous power of hypnotic suggestion, and made definite war upon the extreme luxury, license, and gaudery of society which are now spreading through the streets of the town a contagion terribly destructive to the noblest virtues of the human soul? There is a character in one of Anatole France's novels whose nature is defined as "double-faced by courtesy." It does not do for the visible embodiment of Christ to be double-faced even from motives of charity. I believe that the complacency of the Church towards the materialism of the upper classes and the vulgarity of the middle-classes, is more fatal to the progress of Christianity, more fatal to a true understanding of religion by the soul of the nation, than all the devices and bewitchments of evil. To confuse good and evil, to smudge the lines of selfishness and unselfishness, to attempt to serve God and Mammon,—this is not merely to vulgarise religion, it is to tamper with the Soul of Christ.[1]

"One of the reasons," says Professor Granger, "why popular religion in England seems to be coming to the limits of its power, is that it has contented itself so largely with the commonplace motives which, after all, find sufficient exercise in the ordinary duties of life. Unless God is presented under the attributes of the divine

[1] See Note C at end of book.

majesty, in such a way as to summon forth a heroic effort of the soul to come to its own in Him, religion is degraded to a level below the ordinary standard of honour, and does not appeal to the high spirit which is the natural temper of a free citizen in a free state. When religion is represented as the most refined way of providing for the ultimate future, and a not unprofitable investment for the present, it is classed on its own showing with the business pursuits, which even those who are engaged in them treat, not as ends in themselves, but as means. Yet, unless the divine ideal is presented as an object of desire in and for itself, because of its intrinsic beauty and authority, it is no longer completely effective. The God of Calvin may have been an ideal which was effective in producing a moral renovation, but it is permitted to doubt whether such an ideal ever inspired that disinterested passion of love, which is the highest form of the soul's communion with God. 'He moves the world,' says Aristotle, 'as the object of its desire.'"

One cannot look for the new understanding of religion to seize and possess the imagination of the world until the Church has everywhere ceased to be equivocal and double-faced, until the demarcation between selfishness and unselfishness is positive and unswerving, until trifling with Christianity is as sternly denounced as trifling with immorality, until the children of God be-

come clean separate from the children of Mammon, and until the commandment receives the uncompromising insistence of the whole Church throughout the world—that love for God can only be expressed by service to humanity.

" In acknowledgment of what Christ hath done and suffered, take up this resolution: that it shall be *better* for every one with whom thou hast to do, *because* Christ hath died for thee and him."

" The beggar's rags fluttering in air
Do to rags the heavens tear;

. . . . .

The harlot's cry from street to street
Shall weave old England's winding sheet;
The winner's shout, the loser's curse,
Shall dance before dead England's hearse.

. . . . .

Every night and every morn
Some to misery are born;
Every morn and every night
Some are born to sweet delight.

. . . . .

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land."

# THE FLOWING TIDE

HE stood with the others, watching her die —his mother, to whom he was most deeply devoted. The end was coming without pain. She let her gaze wander lovingly and lingeringly from one to the other of her seven children, and held in a tender embrace the hand of her kneeling husband, beginning to shed the first tears of his widowerhood. She was calm and peaceful. There was distress neither for her body nor for her spirit. She was fading out of life with a gracious compassion and a sweet anxiety for those whom she was leaving upon the earth.

Her eyes closed, and, in a low voice muffled by the falling shadow of death, she began to pray. Earnestly and with an infinite solicitude she besought the Father of humanity to have her children for ever in His care, to guard them, to shield them, to protect them, to keep them in purity and goodness, so that at the end they might all meet in heaven, united after the battle of life in that happy kingdom of His love where there are no more sorrows, no more partings, no more tears.

He was a youth who had never before seen this awful and appalling thing called death. His soul was shaken by it. All the agony of his heart for the loss of a most tender and befriending mother, all the anguish of pathos which her whispered prayer created in his soul, all the tragic and desolating sense of impending disaster which hung like a darkness in his brain, yielded and gave way before the one black, overshadowing sensation of Death in the room, implacable Death close to him, invisible, but felt in every vein of his body. How terrible to die! How ghastly to sink out of existence! How awful to feel the darkness falling and the heart beating to its end! This thing called Death made life unutterably tragic, inexpressibly dreadful. How lonely it was! How isolated from the reach of love! Into the darkness, into the silence, into the mystery—alone!

Many times since that day of tears he has recalled the memory of his mother's dying prayer, and ever to the end of his life the remembrance of that hour will be like a strong angel in his soul. In some ways that hour and that prayer stand in his destiny for the first motion of the outstretching and saving hand of God.

Life looked at him with other eyes after his mother's death. He was emerging from boyhood. He was conscious of a new dawn in his soul. The restraints and safeguards which had

surrounded him on every side from his earliest childhood began to chafe him, began to appear as sensible barriers and obstructions to something in his will which increasingly he felt he must express or go mad with aggravation.

He did not actually lose his faith—perhaps that faith had never been clearly visualised and profoundly felt—but he began to experience an impatience of religious exercises and to feel himself irritated beyond the line of endurance by the drill and mechanic monotony of an obligatory worship. From childhood he had been schooled in the severities of a faith which multiplied the enormities of humanity, decalogued almost every harmless amusement and diversion of the human race, and presented the resting-places of heaven rather as rewards for denials and suppressions than as victories for aspiration and achievement.

To the young man, longing for expression, and hungering after a larger life than he had yet known, the motherless home grew more and more too narrow, too suffocating, and too mean. He began to show his spirit. Let the others sit by the winter fire reading the Bible, singing hymns, and saying Amen to their father's prayers, but he would speak what he felt. Let them go regularly to chapel and school, to class-meetings and temperance gatherings, but he would let them know what he thought. In boyhood it had been

his desire, and the hope of all the others, that one day he would enter the ministry and preach the good news of Christianity; but—when he was a child he had thought as a child. Now, with the blood of manhood singing in his veins and all the pulses of his being beating high for action, he longed only to leave this little Bible-reading home and feel the winds of the world in his eyes.

He told his father that he was too tired to go twice on Sunday to the school; and after the prayer-meeting which followed the evening service in the chapel, and which he found interminably wearisome, he would criticise the minister and find open fault with the sermon. To these portents of danger the father was blind; he regarded the boy only as a little headstrong, and opposed his rebellion merely with the weight of parental authority. Whether the boy liked it or not, he was to go to these services with the others —apparently he stood more in need of them than his sisters and brothers.

But the day of deliverance was at hand. He was to become his own master, to feel no longer the irritation of goading checks and the stifling oppression of home discipline. A situation had been found for him in a country town, a town larger than that in which his childhood and boyhood had passed so uneventfully and so monotonously. "How radiant I was," he says, "when I knew that I was going to be able to have my

fling a little!" By this he does not mean that he was jumping forward to temptation, that he was springing with all the zest in his nature towards the opportunities for sin. He had a horror of evil. He regarded dissipation and vice with an extreme disapproval. For anything really wicked, and really base, and really vile, he felt nothing but repugnance. No; he was straining at the leash, because it was a leash. His desire was not so much to escape as not to be held. He wanted to be free. He wanted to have his will no longer thwarted and his life no longer ordered and mapped by another. He wanted to feel himself truly himself, himself utterly and completely, not another.

The parting from home somewhat sobered this ecstasy. "My father," he says, "came with me to the railway-station. I did not feel in the least sorry that I was leaving home as we walked together up the platform. But just as the time came for the train to move my father took me by the shoulder, and, with one arm round my neck, gave me that kiss which I shall never forget. 'Goodbye, my lad,' he said, looking at me; 'be sure you read your Bible and say your prayers.' As the train moved away I had the sensation of leaving something which I should never find again. I sat down in a corner of the carriage and began to think. That night, I remember well, I did say my prayers and I did

read my Bible; and when the light was out, and I lay waiting for sleep, I had a vision of home and all the past of my life which was so real and wonderful that I can recall it now. I must admit that the first night away from home I sobbed myself to sleep."

He found it was good to be free. The shop in which he served was a small one, the duties were easily learned, he was able to go out into the streets and feel himself his own master. He went to a chapel, he attended various meetings, occasionally he said his prayers, and sometimes, but very rarely, he remembered his father's words and read his Bible. All about him was the stir and movement of a town larger than he had yet known. He felt the inspiration of this active and manifold life. He began to think seriously of making his way to fortune. It was better than going to chapel, to read the newspapers; certainly, far better to fall asleep dreaming of success than to lie sobbing with thoughts of home.

After but a few months in this inspiring atmosphere he moved to a still larger town, and found himself one among many in a considerable house of business. Hitherto he had kept the faith. Hitherto the promise to his father and the dying benediction of his mother had been at least occasionally present and sacred in his soul. He had never wholly abandoned going to religious services, saying his prayers, and reading

his Bible. There had always been present in his mind the feeling of a struggle and an effort, the sense of a Christian endeavouring to fulfil the duties of his calling. He was typical of all youths who go straight from the influence of a too mechanic Christianity into the freedom and temptation of a quite new environment. The very severity of his training prevented him from altogether forgetting the idea of religion, while more and more the feeling of freedom encouraged him to regard with an almost amused amazement the apparent intolerance and narrowness of the cage from which he had escaped.

In his new situation he came face to face with sin. There was none of the reticences of a small town in the crowded streets of this industrial centre. There was no feeling of public opinion in its atmosphere. Self-assertion and a daring recklessness characterised the aspects of the fashionable streets. Everybody appeared boldly vain and unashamedly selfish. It was a flowing tide of careless self-seeking, a carnival of Vanity Fair. To mix in the crowd was to lose all sense of the ancient restraints and ennobling suppressions of humanity. He felt himself one of a great multitude borne away on a tide of festival.

Six men of about his own age shared the room in which he slept. They varied in temperament, and their upbringings had been different; but they were all at one in their attitude towards life.

Religion for these young men was a kind of girlish sentimentalism; morality was the ridiculous invention of the middle-aged; only a fool would refuse himself the opportunities of enjoyment—to enjoy oneself one must go with the tide, get as much fun out of existence as possible, and take no thought of any kind for the morrow.

You can imagine the conversation in that dormitory. There would be "adventures" to relate, indecent stories to tell, accounts to give of sprees in public-houses and music-halls. No note of culture at all. No suggestion whatever of books and pictures and serious plays. No discussion of politics and ethics. No talk of healthful sports and games. Certainly no colloquies on the soul and its destiny. Dirty stories, accompanied by laughter; adventures with women, approved by looks of admiration; recitals of escapades, capped and recapped till every man could feel himself a hero. Such was the spirit of this dormitory.

To the newcomer it was dreadful. He blushed at the conversation. He was horrified by the wickedness of these messmates. So shocked and scandalised was his soul that he took at last to an open expression of his faith. He prayed at his bedside, and he read his Bible night and morning. But it was not for long. The tide was drawing him away from ancient moorings. He felt himself moving towards the others.

More and more he found himself unable to bear the laughter of their mockery and the rough scorn of their ridicule. He ceased to pray, he abandoned thoughts of God. It was so much easier to go with the flowing tide, and it seemed so infinitely more natural to be like all the other people about him. No more chapel, no more private prayers, no more reading of St. John, no more sense of conflict and struggle in his soul—freedom and a sense of yielding to destiny! He would not make himself a prig. He would not set himself up to be different from other people. No, the great world was in the right—let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die. He had no desire to commit sin, he was even anxious always to do right—but he brought himself to a condition of mind when religion is no longer a restraint or a courage in the conscience, and when a man believes that he has attained tolerance in a disinclination to reprehend evil in others.

"When I went home for a holiday," he says, "I was easily able to disguise my true feelings and the change which had taken place in me. My father used to think that I was all right, and appeared to feel no anxiety about me. He had no idea at all of the company I was keeping. But later on I lost my situation, and I came home to wait till I could find another. During this period of waiting my father began

to see that I was not living as moral and as straight a life as he had hoped. On several occasions he hinted at his knowledge of this change in me; then he argued with me openly about it; and finally he made an appeal to me that I would make a surrender of my will and give myself up entirely to the will of God. I turned a stubborn ear to him. I lost my temper. There was a scene which I do not like to think about, and then I announced my intention to go to London and manage for myself. On that last night at home—never shall I forget it—my father pleaded with God to follow me wherever I went, never to forsake me however far I might wander, and expressed the certain knowledge that I should never find rest until I gave myself up to a crucified Saviour."

He went to London and became a shop-assistant in one of the big business houses of the fashionable quarter. Overwhelmed by the splendour of London, bewildered by its myriad temptations, astonished beyond all expression by its frank and quite challenging devotion to pleasure—he threw his lot in with the companions of his dormitory and gave himself absolutely and entirely to the flowing tide.

These companions, in his own words, "never gave God a thought." Everything is said in that phrase. Many men sin and fall and rise again; many virtuous men throughout their lives are

caught away from the best by the temptation of the second-rate or the worst; in vast numbers of men, whatever their conduct, the sense of a conflict between their higher and lower nature is the central fact of their lives—God is always at least a thought in their souls. But there is an immense army of men who, far from feeling the idea of God to be the most beautiful and lifting emotion of the human spirit, and far from feeling any sense of menace or anxiety in that idea, never give a thought to God. Their imaginations cannot rise to the contemplation of an Infinite Being. The pettiness of their surroundings, the wholly effeminate nature of their employment, the disastrous conditions of their millinery lives—these things, whatever the character of their upbringing, tend to obscure in their minds that realisation of the grandeur of the universe and the tremendous issues of life without which any permanent and permeating comprehension of God is almost impossible.

Let us see quite clearly the lot of these young men in the shops of a great city. From morning till evening they are handling all the refinements and luxuries of women's clothing that the most elaborate Fashion can devise. They spend the impressionable years of their manhood in waiting upon women who are seeking to make themselves more beautiful and attractive. They are within doors, in a close atmosphere, associated with

young girls of their own age, with no other use for their brains than to sell the things of the boudoir and the bedroom. In the evening they have the lighted streets for their playground. At night they sleep in dormitories. The only adventure possible to them is an unhealthy sexualism, the only powerful distraction of their leisure the excitements of the town.

It is not easy for these young men to form in their minds a true and enlarging conception of life. It is most difficult for them to follow the path of idealism and set their gaze upon the heights of religion. Whatever we may think of them, this at least must influence our judgment: no conditions of life could be more unnatural for a man, no existence could be more artificial and insidiously destructive of grandeur.

He whose story I have been tracing fell absolutely from goodness and purity in this new environment. London overwhelmed him, seized him as a straw in the tide of its progress, and swept him away with a million others into the vast sea of its infamy and ruin. Who was he to stand against the flooding water? Every one about him was careless, reckless, and indifferent. They were all moving in the same direction. Not one of them was swimming against the tide. Not one of them set an example of conflict. There was no feeling of men shaping their souls and making a righteous destiny. All was a sense

of yielding and acquiescence, a sense of smiling acceptance, a sense of moving with an immemorial tide in the direction of an immemorial end.

For some months he lived the life of his messmates. He went with them to music-halls, joined with them in the carnival of the streets, accompanied them into taverns, and shared in all the wildness of their carousals. Things that would have inexpressibly shocked him a few weeks ago he now did as cheerfully as all the rest; words which would have burned his lips now passed from him carelessly and with a laugh; thoughts which would have filled him with intolerable shame now lay close to his soul and gratified him.

The fall was utter and complete. From an extreme of innocence he descended to an extreme of flippant recklessness. He was happy, he was satisfied. With no God to overshadow his thoughts, with no sense of struggle in his soul to interrupt his will, he was now free to go thoughtlessly and rapturously with the flowing tide. Had he not now fulfilled himself? Was this not the true enfranchisement of the spirit? To be free, to be perfectly free! To do everything he wished to do. To get as much amusement and delight and excitement out of life as all the rest of the world. Yes, he could laugh with the best of them in the tavern, be as

rackety as the wildest of them in the music-hall, get as many adventures out of the streets as the most daring of them, and in the dormitory think as little about God as the most bold and dissolute.

Thus, for many months.

But that mysterious influence in a man's life which we call conscience began gradually to make its presence known in the solitude of his soul. Every now and then he heard a voice sounding in the depths of his being. It was a voice of reproach. It was a voice whose sound brought back a hundred memories in sighs to his lips and in tears to his eyes. He remembered his childhood, his boyhood; he remembered his mother's death; he remembered his struggle to be good and holy; he remembered the farewell embrace of his father; he remembered the prayer of the last night in his home. These remembrances came to him in the moments of his solitude. They accompanied his soul into the unconsciousness of sleep. He awoke with them. They recurred to him during the busiest hours of the day. He could not put them from him in the midst of a boisterous amusement.

He was conscious that he was not what he might have been, not what the love and prayers of his mother, and the unceasing care and training of his father, ought to have made him. He was as bad as, perhaps he was worse than, those of his companions who spoke with contempt of

their parents and who had never in their lives entered a church or read a Bible. He was stained with sin. His innocence was gone, and with his innocence the last shreds of his purity. Indifferent to God, careless of consequences, tired of religion, and abandoned wholly to the degenerate thoughts and atrophying lusts of animalism, he who had once been pure, he who had once been innocent, was moving—very conscious in himself of the sense of the movement—away from all that he had once held good, away from all that was purest and most sweet in his memory, away from the manful combat and the exalting aspirations of his spiritual dawn, moving away from all this on the flowing tide of the world—yes, moving away from the past, but Whither?

It was this thought more than any other which checked him. What was to be the end of such a life? On what ultimate shore would the tide cast his drowning soul? He was not afraid of death, apparently he stood in no fear of God's judgment; but he shuddered at the contemplation of the man he was making, of the destiny he was preparing, of the soul he was creating. He trembled to think what he was to become, here on the earth, by his own shaping and at his own will.

An utter wretchedness of mind took possession of him. More miserable man, he thinks, never

struggled for intensest loneliness in the midst of London's crowding phantasmagoria. Every moment which opened a door to solitude he seized with the eagerness of a hunted animal. To be alone, to think—this was the hunger and thirst of his soul. He wanted to be free of the surging occupations of his life, free of the companions who surrounded him with ribaldry, free of the trivial and the unessential—alone with his soul.

How could he turn, having come so far? turn, and swim back again, back, against the tide? What hope was there for escape from these fathomless waters, wide as the world itself? Where could he turn and find the companionship of the good, an occupation that was ennobling, a future that held something to strive for, something greatly to desire? All about him this broad, moving tide of indifference, reckless abandonment, and unrighteous selfishness, a vast tide of drowning and perishing humanity—how could he escape from it? How could he look to be different from the rest?

On a certain Sunday afternoon he made away from his friends and walked through the streets of London, wrestling with his soul. His dejection was very great. He could not rid himself of a depressing despair, the despair of fatalism. All would be as it was. Nothing could be changed. Till the end of life he would go with

the tide, carried even farther from the shore already out of sight, borne onward into greater darkness and deeper waters of affliction. Nothing could alter it.

He entered Hyde Park through the Marble Arch, and wandered through the crowds of people standing in a loose density before the platforms of rival orators. He heard an atheist's contemptuous challenge, a Socialist's denunciation, and a clergyman's appeal. He stopped and listened. Then he drew nearer. It reminded him of his home.

The appeal of this missioner was made to young men who had come from the provinces pure and upright and who had become in London base, careless, and degenerate. No words could have struck cleaner home to his heart. He drew still nearer, listened with all his soul, and felt the tears coming into his eyes. He bowed his head, ashamed of those tears, but conscious of the relief they brought him, and listened like a guilty man to the words of the preacher. After this sermon a lady sang a solo, a voice so beautiful and caressing that it instantly drew crowds away from the other platforms. In the thick of these people the young man listened and longed for a return to purity. The words went home to his heart, the music haunted his soul. "If anybody," he says, "had asked me at that moment definitely to give myself to God,

without a thought I should have thrown myself at the feet of my Saviour."

But no one spoke to him, and when the meeting broke up he passed solitarily away, a unit in the immense and separating crowd. He found himself in the streets, "the most miserable man that ever trod upon God's earth."

For a week he endured this intense misery, longing to escape from his evil companions, hungering to be stronger than temptation, and thirsting after reconciliation with God.

Early one morning there was a sudden and unusual excitement in the house of business where he was employed. He saw men with white faces and scared eyes talking together. People were hurrying to and fro. He inquired the cause of this commotion. Some one told him, "Robert Hards was found dead in his bed, suffocated with gas."

Yesterday he had worked side by side with this poor youth; they had talked together; young Hards was strong and robust, a brave companion, a good worker—the last man in the world to make an end of himself. But he was dead. Something in his life had been heavier than his soul could endure. He had escaped from the world; he had got out of life; he was dead; but his soul—where was his soul?

The tragic death of his friend and companion made a profound and determining impression

on the mind of the poor youth struggling for escape from the flood of ruin.

Say that, afraid of hell, he feared to die as he was, or that, conscious of heaven, he longed to die other than he was—whatever the human words may be by which we choose to designate the movement and pressing impulse of his soul, certain it is that he came face to face with the last thing in human experience, looked death in the eyes, saw the terrible hazard that lay behind that ever-approaching and never-to-be-placated spectre in man's path, and determined to be a better man. He says that the death of Robert Hards shook him terribly, that he was haunted by it, that the suddenness of it was like a stunning blow to him; but also he says that, detached from himself, he thought for a long time of the home from which Hards had come, thought of the parents and their prayers, and felt the pathos of that tragic ending with a most poignant sensation of tears. The thought of good, therefore, was at least present in his mind, however overriding the fear of death. All the purity and goodness of childhood revived in his soul, as imagination pictured the home of the poor suicide. He imagined the hopes that a father and mother had entertained for that unhappy youth, and recalled to his mind the parting benediction of his own mother and the prayers of the father whose love he had requited with a life

of failure and wretchedness. Certainly if death terrified him, he was also conscious of remorse, shame, and aspiration.

He was in the position of a man who knows the way out of danger but is afraid to take it. There was nothing that priest could tell him. If he had not deeply experienced religion, at least he knew all that it had to say to a soul in his condition. He knew that he must bow himself in the dust and cry for help to a Saviour. He knew that it was in vain to struggle until that submission had been made. Moreover, he had the feeling of a necessity for public humiliation, public confession, public cry for mercy and assistance. He was conscious of the need for some strong and extraordinary action on the part of his soul, some moment of upheaval never to be found in the hours of solitude. He was convinced of this. He was absolutely convinced of it. Before he could be born again, before he could feel his body purged by conversion and his spirit renewed by regeneration, it was necessary for him—however he might shrink from it—to suffer an abnormal experience.

He prayed in secret to God, and in that prayer he vowed to make the act of submission, if he were spared to do so, on the following Sunday.

He kept his vow. The preacher in Hyde Park had belonged to the West London Mission. When Sunday came he went to the central service

of this Mission. At the conclusion of the service the invitation was given for those who felt themselves greatly in need of a Saviour to stand up. He was the first to rise. All nervousness, all timidity, all hampering self-consciousness departed from his mind, and he was conscious of nothing but his soul's need and a longing for the new life and the cleansing sense of regeneration.

In the room into which he was taken he met the man who has since become his dearest friend and chiefest blessing, a most able and excellent man, free of all cant, quiet and attractive in his enthusiasm, profoundly experienced in the tragedies of human life. Tenderly received and graciously encouraged by this missioner, the young man then and there, to use his own words, "gave himself to God," a phrase which means a deep, utter, and most earnest submission of the human will to that sense of the Divine will, that sense of the highest and the best, that sense of pursuing love and overshadowing protection which exists in the soul of all who have ever prayed.

"Since that night," he says, "my life has been one long joy and gladness."

All the hesitancy left him. Temptations to which he had yielded withered like flowers struck by a frost. Shame to confess his faith lifted like a mist from his brain. He felt the sun shining

in his face. He was conscious of strength. He was conscious of courage. He was conscious of joy. Never more would he fear the ridicule of men or be ashamed to confess his Master. Rather with a very glory of suffusing certitude would he profess the faith of his soul and live the life of a Galahad, even if it had to be in a London shop.

"It is with man's Soul," says Carlyle, "as it was with Nature: the beginning of Creation is —Light." And of Conversion he says: "Blame not the word, rejoice rather that such a word, signifying such a thing, has come to light in our modern Era, though hidden from the wisest Ancients. The Old World knew nothing of Conversion; instead of an *Ecce Homo,* they had only some *Choice of Hercules.* It was a new-attained progress in the Moral Development of man: hereby has the Highest come home to the bosoms of the most Limited; what to Plato was but a hallucination, and to Socrates a chimera, is now clear and certain to your Zinzendorfs, your Wesleys, and the poorest of their Pietists and Methodists."

## TWO ROADS

ONLY as a pendant to the foregoing narrative—for there are other tales of a more diverse and wonderful kind waiting to be told—I set down in this place, as briefly as possible, the story of another youth who came to London from a good home in the provinces, and but for the saving hand of religion must have ended his life most miserably, and perhaps very tragically, among the wreckage of that great but perilous city.

He was cursed from boyhood with an ungovernable temper, and flung himself out of his father's home in a fit of rage to make his own way in life, and at whatever cost, in some employment, he cared not greatly what it was, where he would be free of parental control.

When his brothers asked him what he was going to do in London, he told them to mind their own business. When his father implored him to stay at home, he replied that he would rather die. Sick of the simple life in that little town, weary of influences which had begun to gall him, this headstrong and impetuous youth shook the dust of home from off his feet, and

went up to London his own master and without a friend in the world.

By means of an advertisement in a newspaper he obtained employment in a wine-bar, and so proud was he of this place that he wrote insolently home on the notepaper of the tavern, telling his brothers that they did not know what life was, poked down in a little miserable country town. As for religion, he had put it clean out of his mind, once and for all.

His last employer in that country town had been his boyhood's Sunday-school teacher, and hearing of his condition, this good man journeyed to London, visited the wine-bar, and begged the youth to give up such hazardous work and return home to work in his shop. "I can't tell you," says the youth, "just how I felt; something tempted me to tell him to mind his own business, and then again there was another voice telling me to take his advice. I didn't tell him to mind his own business, but by my manner I let him see that I resented his interference. He went away, and did not trouble me again."

Some time after this came his first Christmas in London, and he took to drink. He became loose in his conduct and careless in his habits, but he performed his duties well, and was popular with his employers. After a year's work, conscious of unrest in his mind, he looked out for another place, and obtained a better situation

in a more fashionable wine-bar. He was much happier here, till he fell in love with a girl employed at the same place. This girl, who appears to have been beautiful, capricious, and coquettish, was in some dim way mindful of virtue. She was engaged to a man at sea; her troth was faithful, in her opinion, so long as she did not fall into sin with anybody else; she permitted herself to flirt, she sought to make herself attractive and bewitching, but there was always a point at which flirtation stopped. Desperately enamoured of this girl, truly and profoundly in love with her so far as his nature could comprehend love, the young man gave himself up to his adoration. For her he saved his money, and with her he spent that money in theatres, music-halls, and restaurants.

Love, working like a madness in his corrupted blood, brought him at last to such a dejection that he contemplated the murder of the girl he could never possess. He would murder her, and then commit suicide. He says it was not so much the thought that he could never possess her, but the terrible thought that somebody else would, which seemed to drive him mad and strengthen his determination to murder her. Rather than see her the wife of another man he would see her dead, and dead by his own hand. It was unbearable that she should be taken from him.

He drank harder than ever in this great dejection, alternating between wild and heroic moods, when murder seemed an apotheosis for his troubled soul, and shuddering moods when the baseness of his life came home to him like a monition from destiny.

"It was nothing but the Hand of God," he says, "which kept me from murder. I could distinctly hear a Voice telling me to make a fresh start in life."

Haunted by this Voice, pursued by it in every thought of his brain, the conflict between the violence of his passion and the quiet pleading of his conscience moving every day to the hour when decision must be made for good or for evil, he perceived with absolute clearness of vision that rescue lay for him in two things—he must utterly stamp out every dying ember of his present life, he must utterly give himself up to the life of religion.

He began to follow the famous Regent Street Band of the Salvation Army on Sunday afternoons. Sometimes he would go to a service. Sometimes he went to open-air meetings in Hyde Park.

"I tried to cover my sins," he says, "but they stared me in the face worse than ever. I could see the net I was weaving about myself was getting tighter every day. At last, in desperation, I wrote asking my

old Sunday-school teacher to help me out of the trouble."

The result of that letter was an introduction to the West London Mission. He attended the services, but his trouble remained. "I began to feel sorry I had ever written. My old filthy temper was rising up in rebellion again. Many questions crossed my mind." But finally, after a great battle, he saw one of the missioners. "I was doubting between two questions: whether God was leading me, or whether it was only fancy on my own part. I prayed for guidance. I became fully convinced that it rested with me to decide between right and wrong. One thing I knew—I had the choice of two roads. I thank God for giving me the strength to choose the narrow road which leads to eternal life. If anybody told me they didn't believe that God led me, I should ask them what reason they could give me for the sudden change in my conscience."

Shepherded by the West London Mission, he became not only a convert, but a worker, and now, having felt the clamour of his manhood for a life more vigorous than the metropolis can afford young men, he is a collier in Wales, fighting the soul's battle in more manful surroundings, and trusting only in prayer for the strength to support his resolutions.

"I am a proper collier now," he writes, "and

have a good laugh at myself when I look in the glass after I have been working. You would never know me, I am sure."

But for religion, what would have been the fate of this man?

# THE VISION OF A LOST SOUL

IN the middle of the last century there was living in a county town on the northern side of London a family which had all those good qualities to be found in provincial society, when sobriety of conduct, assiduity in business, and loyalty to religious traditions were accepted as the first essentials of respectability, before the levity, flippancy, and light-hearted tolerance of the metropolis had penetrated to corrupt the rigidity of an old-fashioned behaviour.

To casual observance this family presented the appearance of an untroubled prosperity. The father was a well-to-do solicitor who associated himself with the civic life of the town and took a leading part in the local religion and politics of Nonconformist circles. He occupied a comfortable house on the outskirts of the town, was regarded by his neighbours as a man of substance, and enjoyed the respect of those who most differed from him in politics and religion. He was a man of such large heart, such frank pleasantness, such shining honesty, and such contagious tolerance that he inspired the good-will of every class and faction in the town, and was

regarded as a friend and consulted as a man of business even by those who regretted his dissent and wished his politics at the bottom of the sea.

In the humbler orbit of their social life, the wife and mother of this family enjoyed an equal popularity and an even warmer love. Whereas the man was big, capacious, and expansive, she was minute, quiet, tender, and sympathetic—a little mouse of a woman whose brown eyes and appealing smile did not in the least conceal the vigour of a quick intelligence and the masterfulness of an inflexible will. She was famous in the circle of her acquaintance as a woman of parts—an excellent manager, a fine needlewoman, a successful gardener, and the possessor of unequalled recipes for puddings and cakes. Moreover she was known to her intimates as a woman of the shrewdest judgment, and as a relentless enemy of sentimentalism, humbug, equivocation, and fiddle-faddle of every kind and description.

There were three children of the marriage, two girls and a boy. At the hands of their father they received every indulgence. Under the more constant governance of the mother they were trained with a noble severity and a righteous economy. The child of whom this story tells never felt for the kind and indulgent father anything like the same enthusiastic admiration which she entertained towards the sterner mother.

This child, writing to me now as a middle-aged woman, and after one of the most terrible experiences that can befall a human creature, says that the home-life, as she remembers it, was quiet and regular, knowing nothing either of excitation or depression. Her mother had grown up in the strictest principles of a stern sect, and governed her own home on the same lines. "We went regularly to chapel, attended Sunday School from a very early age, and were not allowed to engage in any doubtful amusements, such as card-playing, theatricals, or dancing. We were taught 'to fear God and keep His commandments,' but never once were we taught to understand that love of God, leading to a willing and happy obedience, is the true life of a Christian. As for the intellectual tone of the home, it was fairly cultured, above the average of that time in middle-class circles. My father was a keen politician, and made me read the parliamentary debates to him; my sister was intelligent and well-read; my brother was clever, musical, and very attractive—for many years he was my highest ideal of manhood." A sympathetic reader will be able to form for himself the picture of this family's sitting-room on a winter-night—the father reading his newspaper on one side of the hearthrug, the little mother busy with needle and thread on the other, a long-haired, "very attractive" youth standing

at the piano, one sister playing his accompaniment, the other sister glancing from her book, as she turns the page, at the handsome brother, texts on the wall, a wire flower-stand with plants in the bow window, a clean hearth, nothing out of place, and curtains drawn to keep out the night and muffle the moan of the wind.

Who will think that a family of such uninteresting prosperity and such Hebraic notions of the gift of life, could be haunted by a ghost, could have a skeleton locked away in the cupboard, could have a spectre standing in the midst of them, between the human hearth and the curtained window? Who would suppose that this little circle of human commonplace, this little group of dull goodness and mechanical respectability, were living under the black impending shadow of desolation and death, were to be scattered like chaff before the wind, were to be stricken with a sword of fire, were to be plunged into the abyss of degradation? Who could suppose, to see them gathered there in warm security and comfortable ease, so united in family affection, so secluded from the heat and glare of temptation, so unlikely to feel the sweep of deep emotion or the dizzying rush of passion—that in the blood of every one of them, save only the mother busy with her needle and thread, was such a poison, such a taint, such a furious

madness as would one day rend their souls and tear their bodies like the demons of old?

The spectre in the room was the ghost of the man's father, and one can imagine how the ghost trembled and shook with a guilty palsy of remorse when the man rose from his chair and went to the decanter and glasses on the table. . . .

In those days medical knowledge had not penetrated to general society; and medical knowledge of what we now understand by the term dipsomania had not advanced to any warrantable certainty even among the most thorough of investigators. That the thing called dipsomania was entirely different from drunkenness had not entered the consciousness of mankind, nor was it generally believed that a child could inherit from its parents an overmastering and insatiable passion for alcohol. Therefore even the watchful and devoted mother of this family, who knew that their grandfather had died a drunkard's death, who knew that their father made an increasing use of the decanter, who knew that several of their cousins were already on the road of alcoholic ruin, who could see wherever she looked that the thing was in the family, spreading like a hideous cancer among all the descendants of the dead grandfather in his drunkard's grave, never thought that her children, trained to fear God and keep His commandments, taken regularly to chapel and sent from their earliest years

to Sunday School, could fall to perdition and become like maniacs through drink.

So they grew up, unsuspected and unwarned; and childhood passed away, youth came, and the dawn of independence found them still happy and united, still living in the sunshine of prosperity, and still, in the eyes of all their neighbours, an enviable and pattern family exemplifying the proverbs of respectability and justifying the commercial wisdom of the middle-classes.

The youngest daughter was at this time the most active worker of the family in religious matters. She taught in the Sunday School, visited what is called a tract district, and took a leading part in the organisation of religious meetings. It was just at this period that the great temperance movement, of which we are only now beginning to see the harvest, came into existence, and greeted by the scorn, derision, and contempt of mankind set itself to fight a disease far more deadly than tuberculosis. A local society was formed in the town where this family lived, and the youngest daughter joined it—*against the wishes of her mother.* It was pointed out to her by this good mother that she had always been used to wine, that for some years she had regularly taken stout on the advice of the doctor, and that suddenly to break this habit and discontinue this treatment was to imperil her health. The girl, however, stuck to her point, and, having

learned something of temperance reform, began to perceive the possibility of inherited danger in the case of herself and her family. She placed herself at the head of a local Band of Hope, and was one of the most devoted temperance reformers in the district.

For ten years she was a devout Christian, according to her lights, and certainly a most energetic, painstaking, and earnest worker in the religious life of her native place. Then, when she was about eight-and-twenty, a change came over her character. She grew cold and indifferent in the religious life. Private prayer was neglected, if she read the Bible it was hurriedly and impatiently to "get up" a lesson for Sunday School, if she went to chapel it was only because of appearances. During this time there were occasions when the father startled and saddened the family by drunkenness.

The religious crisis lasted with her for nearly four years. Now and then a sermon more earnest and searching than usual would stir a faint desire in her heart for the peace and happiness which she had known in the past; but more and more dimly did the light burn in her soul, until at last, deliberately and consciously, she abandoned aspiration and relinquished every effort to believe. "I settled down," she says, "to a life of conscious hypocrisy."

I would sooner find a definition for any word

in the dictionary than for this one word, "hypocrisy." Fear of hypocrisy has certainly been a cause of ruin to many souls more sensitive on the score of their own personal honour than regardful of public opinion. To pretend to be good is often the best ladder a soul can find from the pit of perdition. To sin in secret is one way of acknowledging to oneself that sin is shameful. To be mindful of the censure of neighbours is one way of confessing to oneself the sovereignty of conscience. How many men have been won ultimately to purity by keeping themselves aloof from the company of honest sinners, and by hiding their falls from the company of virtuous people with whom they associated? And how many men have gone headlong to corruption and desolation by forsaking the society of the good and abandoning the pretence of virtue, out of disgust and fear for the name of hypocrite? "The road to heaven," said a friend of Edward FitzGerald, "is made up of resolutions made, broken, and renewed." To break a good resolution secretly, privately, and with shame, seems to argue a finer nature and a more sensitive spirit than to break it publicly and recklessly. In each case, mark you, it is cowardice of public opinion which determines the course of action—the one man is afraid of the censure of the good, the other of the ridicule of the bad.

But this woman insists with a piercing contrition that she was a conscious and deliberate hypocrite. It is her hypocrisy that causes her greater distress of soul than anything else in her tragic life. She cannot bear to think about it even now; the memory of it bows her head and brings tears to eyes which have long learned to shine with the most beautiful happiness;—"I settled down," she says, "to a life of conscious hypocrisy, for I had not the courage to avow the change in my heart."

Outwardly she maintained her Christian standing—taught in the Sunday School, led the Band of Hope meetings, visited her tract district, regularly attended class meetings, and regularly was present at Communion. She did not dare to tell her mother that faith had disappeared from her heart; she did not dare to set the neighbours talking by giving up her work and absenting herself from Communion. She believed nothing. Nevertheless she marched in the ranks of those who believed everything.

Her bodily strength began to give way, and under the stress of this physical exhaustion she broke her pledge: "I took at first only a tiny drop, when my physical strength seemed unequal to the demand upon it; after a time it grew to be a regular habit, but still I kept within the bounds of temperance and all seemed safe. My friends at home rejoiced to see *how reasonable*

I had grown, for they had always objected to my total abstinence."

Things were in this perilous condition when the storm broke. It began by the decay of the father's power and his surrender to alcoholism. The prosperity of the home became clouded and overcast. The brother who had married and was living in London became at this time a victim of drink, and lost his employment. The sister who had been married some years and was the mother of children, suddenly fell under the same curse. In the midst of all this sorrow came the news that the man to whom the youngest daughter was engaged, to whom she was passionately attached and earnestly devoted, had been taken seriously ill and was lying at death's door. A few weeks of agonising suspense, and then the deepest darkness of all for her despairing heart.

It was this cataclysm of tragedy that swept away the soul of the woman and crushed it to the earth. She had gone out as a governess at the first signs of her father's failing health, and for some years had been helping to support the family. Now, with the complete downfall of her father, the sudden catastrophe to the affections of her heart, the fall of her brother, and the wreck of her sister, she felt herself so stricken and hopeless that she gave herself to drink. No longer to support physical exhaustion,

but deliberately to drown anguish and misery, she drank deeply, regularly, and with cunning.

Her condition was to become worse. The financial peril of her family impelled her into crime. Her mother was in direst need of money; she held in her hands a sum of money entrusted to her by her employers during their absence from home; instead of discharging the liabilities of housekeeping week by week, she let the bills accumulate and sent the money home. No sooner had she taken this step than she imagined herself in danger of arrest and imprisonment. She started at sudden sounds, trembled at the ring of a bell, feared every letter that arrived from her employers.

> "What fortitude the soul contains
> That it can so endure
> The accent of a coming foot,
> The opening of a door!"

It was useless now for her to struggle against the temptation of drink. To drink was necessary. Life was impossible without it. And while she sat drinking in her bedroom, her brain was busy with a hundred terrifying imaginations, destructive of will power. She felt herself paralysed and doomed. Like a rat in a trap, like a fly in a spider's web, like a lamb in a slaughter-house, she waited for the sure end. It would come, she thought, suddenly and unexpectedly.

The husband would return from abroad on a matter of business, and ask to see the tradesmen's books. The tradesmen might have hinted suspicions to the servants and they might have written in secret to the mistress, and already the police might have been told to arrest her. What would become of her? No one would believe that she had only intended to borrow the money, that she had meant to pay it back, that it was not upon herself she had spent it.

She set herself to raise money as quickly as possible in order to pay back the embezzled sum. It was a difficult task. She could borrow from friends, she could sell some of her possessions, but the sum was a large one and her resources were limited. In the midst of this agonising experience, when she must have been on the very verge of distraction, the news came of her father's death.

At the last moment, when detection would have been unavoidable, she received an unexpected sum of money which enabled her to make up the criminal deficiency. But this piece of fortune could not relieve a mind which was now plunged again into fresh despair by her father's death. The tragedy of the ruined home drew the blinds on every window of her soul. She could see nothing outside herself; and within she was conscious only of darkness and doom.

Worse things were yet to come upon her.

Not very long after her father's death, the news came that her sister had now become so hopelessly a dipsomaniac that the doctor had advised her husband to seek a separation and to obtain control of the children. Of the once handsome and idealised brother the only news that came told of a deeper descent into destitution and misery.

She was now in a fresh situation as governess, living in London, and keeping her mother in humble apartments close to the place of her residence. One of her pupils was a girl of sixteen with an evil mind, a prurient curiosity in men which led her into behaviour out-of-doors horribly shocking to the poor dipsomaniac. On two or three occasions she had to speak peremptorily to this girl. An enmity was established between them. Once, when the parents were away and she was in sole authority, there came a conflict between her and the pupil which ended in crisis. The mother returned in a hurry. On one side was the statement of the governess, on the other the indignant denial of a lying daughter, supported by suborned servants and the clamorous testimony of the other children. It was not unnatural that the mother decided against the governess.

She was now in that mood when it seems the whole world is against us. She tried not to drink, and for some weeks she was able to do

entirely without it; but in the end the craving had its way with her, and she drank steadily for days together.

The saddest blow of all came at this time. The brother whom she had adored in the happy days of childhood, and who still had an affectionate place in her heart, put an end to himself after realising that the dipsomaniac is beyond the reach of human salvation.

Can you imagine a situation more charged with disaster and despair? Here was this woman, out of work, living in semi-poverty with a penniless mother, knowing that her sister had been pronounced an incurable dipsomaniac, knowing that her brother had destroyed himself through dipsomania, and knowing better than she knew anything else on earth that she herself had the same poison burning in her blood;—what could come of such a situation but ruin and death?

She went one day to stay with some friends living in another quarter of London, from whom she hoped to hear of employment. They said to her one evening, "Hugh Price Hughes is preaching at our chapel to-night, would you care to hear him?" More to please these friends and to keep up an appearance of interest in religion, she expressed her desire to go with them.

She has quite forgotten what was the text of that sermon, or what was the nature of its appeal, but she tells me that it had a most startling and

dismaying effect upon her soul. "It was as if," she says, "he knew my whole story, knew the frightful corruption and hypocrisy of my heart, and was holding up a mirror before me, and saying—'Look at yourself! this is how you appear in the sight of God, this is what you are!' I shall never forget the sense of guiltiness which came over me. It was the first time I knew myself intimately to be what I was. It made me vile in my own eyes, and afraid—terribly afraid."

She was greatly troubled by this sermon, but for so long had she masked her secret self from the gaze of the world that she was able to hide the present disquiet from her friends. That night she lay sleepless for many aching hours, not tortured by a craving for drink, but agonised by bitterest self-knowledge. Hitherto there had hung between her consciousness and her soul a curtain of cloud, a net of twilight, a film of shadows; she had been moving like one in a dream; things had looked at her through a mist and she had touched life as it were with gloved hands. But now in a white light she saw the image of her inmost self steadily regarding her from the mirror of her conduct. She was aware of life with a sharp reality. She was conscious of God with fear.

So violent and complete was this awakening that she could not rest. It was necessary to act.

She felt herself forced towards the man who had shown her the reflection of her own soul. She must go to him, and say, "I am what you told me I am: tell me now how I can make myself what I am not: you have awakened me, it must be you who can transform me."

On the following morning she made an excuse to her friends and set out to discover the residence of Hugh Price Hughes. He was living in Taviton Street, from which address he so long and so splendidly organised the great crusade of the West London Mission. At the door she hesitated and shrank, but her need was great; she summoned up courage to ring the bell. She was conducted to an empty room. As she stood there, waiting in unbroken silence, the horror of her situation struck her like a blow. The handle of that door would soon turn, a man would enter, "You wish to see me?" he would say, and he would look at her, and wait for her to speak. Could she tell him in cold blood all the darkness and vileness of her heart?

The door opened. A lady entered.

Something of relief entered the heart of the distracted woman. She was reprieved. There would be no need to confess.

"My husband is very busy, he sends you his apologies; can I take him a message, or is there anything that I can do?"

It has been well said, "The Saviour of the

world laid a cool hand upon the brow of humanity as it throbbed with multitudinous impulses, and by a miracle more admirable than that of the Galilean lake, calmed the spiritual tempest into the peace of God." It is the same with those fine and exquisite souls who have most deeply possessed themselves of the secret of their Master; a calm issues from these happy ones like the breath of the dawn, one is conscious in them of an emanation like the serenity of quiet water, they hush the tempest and rebuke the tumult of our hearts by the tranquillity that dwells in their eyes and the peace that lives upon their lips.

The poor sinner felt herself drawn by an irresistible attraction towards that gentle, sweet-faced, kindly woman, who regarded her with a wistful inquiry, whose voice sounded like a caress, who still held her hand, as if she knew how great and terrible the need for help. In a moment the flood-gates of her soul were opened, the pent waters of agony and remorse, black with sin and heaving with despair, poured like a frenzied cataract into the light of day, and all her shame and ancient reticence were swept away like broken spars and shattered stakes on this tide of unimaginable misery which sought only to lose itself in the ocean of love. All that she had been, all that she was, all that she had done, all that she feared she must do again and again till the

end of her life—everything in her heart and mind, uttered itself in the accents of a soul's despair, sparing nothing, hiding nothing, excusing nothing.

And while she spoke she was conscious through her tears of calm eyes and lips of serenity, of a soul which stood outside the tempest of her mind, and which regarded her with pity and affection.

What was there to say? She had confessed herself a hypocrite, acknowledged herself a thief, stigmatised herself a drunkard. What hope would the kindest and ablest of doctors have given to this woman of over thirty years of age, whose grandfather and father were in drunkard's graves, whose brother had destroyed himself because of dipsomania, whose sister was separated from her husband as a dipsomaniac, and who confessed herself with pitiable self-reproach and self-despair as powerless to resist the driving fury of her craving?

The answer made by Mrs. Price Hughes to this sad and terrible confession was a very old one, but one that science does not even yet recognise as a cure either for dipsomania or for a broken heart. She recommended no drugs, she mentioned the reputation of no hypnotist. She told the miserable and despairing woman that the love of God is tender and infinite, that the power of Christ is without bounds, and that the

love of God and the power of Christ descend into the heart of a sinner on the stair of supplication.

She was not shocked by the story of the penitent, never once did she show signs of disgust or impatience; she understood all that was said, and all that was left unsaid, and at the end she declared the certainty of her conviction that help would come, that there *was* help. "I beg you to believe," she pleaded, "that God is not only ready to help you, but is eager to save you."

They prayed together; but the poor woman went away with darkness in her heart. She had made a friend, she was touched by the nobility and loving-kindness of this friend, and she felt that if help did come it would be through her; but she had no faith, she looked for no miracle, and she saw no light.

Again and again she visited the house in Taviton Street. On one of these visits she confessed that she still drank. "I had not thought," she writes to me, "that I was in danger from the moderate amount I was then drinking; but after much persuasion from Mrs. Hughes I again signed the pledge, and the awful struggles I had, to be true to my promise, revealed to me the danger I had been in and the terrible hold love of drink had upon me. At this point I am convinced that nothing but my love for dear Mrs. Hughes, and my terror of disappointing her,

kept me from yielding to the temptation which again and again assailed me. There was still darkness in my soul, nothing but a grim resolve not to yield and still to pray. I never, never can forget the agony of those long months of weary, hopeless groping in the dark—battling all the while with the fierce desire to drown my sorrow in drink. One night, while watching by the sickbed of my mother, the smell of brandy ordered for her almost overcame my resolution; I actually did rise to pour some out, but as I did so I caught sight of Mrs. Hughes's photograph standing on the table, and I *could* not disappoint her."

Since she wrote these words I have met her, and she has told me more fully than it was possible to write the nature of her sufferings. If you can imagine what it would be for a man consumed by hunger to see surrounding him on every side and within reach of his hands, the very food he most desired but must not eat because of a promise—you may have some notion in your mind of the torment suffered by this woman. She was sometimes brought to the edge of madness. Never a hunted creature pursued by hounds of death suffered as she did at this time.

She arrived one day before Mrs. Price Hughes full of despair. She had prayed, she said, but no answer had come. "It was just as if," she

said to me, "I had been praying to brazen skies; I felt that the whole universe was full of silence; that heaven was empty. I told Mrs. Hughes what I felt—how I had gone on praying, how I had struggled and was still struggling to keep my pledge, and how I believed that my hypocrisy had sinned me out of God's mercy, and that He would not listen to my prayer. I spoke rather bitterly, almost angrily—for I felt myself quite at the end of my strength. But more than bitterness and anger, I was conscious of a drowning despair. I felt everything giving way beneath me. I could feel ruin and degradation closing about me. I thought it was useless to go on trying. When I had finished speaking, Mrs. Hughes looked at me very tenderly, but very sadly, and said in her quiet, earnest way, with that haunting voice of hers full of a gentle rebuke: 'Well, dear, I can do no more for you. It is useless for me to say any more. You know all I have got to tell you.' Then she added, with a sudden energy: 'I can't think why you don't respond. There is your Saviour, standing quite close to you, stretching out loving, pleading hands to you, *longing* to save you—and you turn away and won't believe Him. If you turn away from Him, how can *I* help you?' It is not easy for me to tell you what happened. Before she had finished speaking I saw Christ, just as she had described Him. A great tumult took place in

my mind. It was like a crashing of masonry. There was no joy, and no peace, but an absolute *certainty*. I knew that my Redeemer lived. I knew that He desired to save me. I knew that I had only to trust Him and He *would* save me. I clutched Mrs. Hughes's arm, and clung to her with a kind of frantic terror. She told me afterwards that the clutch of my hand hurt her arm for many days; I was like one possessed—not outwardly, though I was trembling, but in my soul, where I was conscious of God. All I could do was to cling to Mrs. Hughes, and wait for the tempest in my soul to go. You see, the dawn had come not as it comes in England, tranquilly and slowly, but as it comes in the tropics, suddenly and at once, with a complete glory. I was *certain*. Afterwards there was joy and a great peace, but then, at that wonderful moment, everything in my soul and body centred in the single idea of absolute *certainty*. There was a God. There was a Christ. There was forgiveness for sin, and strength to withstand temptation. Like a flash the light had come. I saw how I was wronging my Lord, and piercing His loving heart, and at that moment the struggle and strife ended. I laid down my burden of sorrow and shame at His feet. I felt myself forgiven. I almost fainted under the revulsion of feeling, and what I really said or did I cannot tell."

One is aware that scepticism will feel itself

quite able to explain away this vision. It was not objective; it was subjective. It was not a fact; it was a phantasm. The same explanation serves for the vision of St. Paul. But here the most superstitious of Christians may be pardoned a little judicious scepticism. Is one seriously asked to believe that hallucination gave birth to the Gospel to the Gentiles, and that Christendom has its foundations in the purely subjective phantasm of a solitary missionary? This is surely history from Bedlam. Moreover, if the vision be accepted as subjective; if one agrees that no objective and exterior figure stood before the soul either of Saul or of this poor penitent of later days; if one owns that other eyes would have seen nothing, that the vision was purely interior and secret—one does not do away with miracle, does not make the vision false. To manifest oneself to the eye of sense does not seem so great a thing as to manifest oneself to the eye of the soul. A phenomenon to the spiritual apprehension is no less a miracle than a phenomenon to the physical organism. Let it be said that it was the thought of Christ striking suddenly on the consciousness of this woman which led her to imagine that she actually beheld the Figure of her Lord; even so, the manifestation may have been supernatural and divine. Why should that not be the method of God? The only test of a vision is its consequence.

We can never determine the nature of these appearances, or satisfactorily explain the character of these experiences; but we can judge by their effect upon those who assert them whether they are worthy of reverence or contempt.

Science has declared emphatically that dipsomania (not drunkenness) is an incurable disease. Only a few weeks ago I was discussing this subject with one of the best physicians of the day who has made a particular study of the question. He told me that no dipsomaniac can be cured. He declared it as a dogma that the will of the dipsomaniac is powerless against his obsession; for weeks, for months even, he may strive—but the end is inevitable. Without expressing any opinion on the nature of religious conversions, he said that conversion or hypnotism might certainly cure drunkenness, but that no power on earth could cure dipsomania.

Now, what must be the order of a vision which cures a disease, a madness, pronounced by science to be incurable? What must we think of a phantasm, an hallucination, a nothing, which produces in a human being an effect declared by science to be impossible? If science is right in saying that these visions are hysterical and hallucinatory, surely science is also right in saying that dipsomania is incurable. But if we come upon a dipsomaniac who is not only cured, but

cured by a vision, may we not justly think that the science which declares the malady to be incurable may be wrong in supposing the vision to be imaginary?

Follow the rest of this woman's story and decide with an honest judgment—the hardest thing to come by—whether there was divinity or hysteria in her vision.

Nearly twenty years have passed away since she saw that vision of the Saviour of the world. They have been years of many sorrows and many trials; they have been spent in the East under a burning sky; they have been devoted to the hard and often heartbreaking work of teaching heathen people to understand the beauty of the Christian Idea; and with my hand on my heart I can avow that from this once harried and broken woman incomparable blessing has flowed into hundreds of human hearts, that happier and brighter woman I have seldom met, that purer heart and nobler disposition I have seldom encountered, that better Christian and truer disciple I have never known.

But there is a degree of truth in what science has to say about dipsomania. For fourteen years after her illumination this good and noble woman was assailed from time to time by an almost irresistible temptation to drink. These terrible assaults, which often prostrated her, would come suddenly and in the most unexpected and difficult

situations. She has been torn with the passion, suddenly and with a ghastly ferocity, at the service of Communion; the touch of fermented wine at her lips has been sufficient to revive all the madness of her longing; she has had to flee for her life from the highest sacrament of her religion. It would seem that the vision did not supplant her poisoned will with another, but endowed that tampered and corrupted will with an Idea gradually creating an increasing power of resistance.[1] She has suffered under all these assaults grievously and quite horribly, but never once with the old despair, never once with a loss of faith in God's power to help her. And now for nearly six years she has been entirely immune. She is rejoicing in this deliverance and is quietly hopeful that the dark days are over and past for ever; but she is watchful and prayerful, knowing that even if temptation should return there is a power which can save her, but that only by prayer—which is aspiration winged by faith—can that power co-operate with the human will.

She has told me of fits of melancholy which seized upon her from time to time long after her vision. She would hear a voice telling her that whatever she might now pretend or hope to be, she had once descended to depths of shame, and had been a hypocrite, dishonest, and a drunkard.

[1] See Note D. at end of book.

At such periods she would always be assailed by a maddening temptation "to drown remembrance in strong drink." "It seemed sometimes," she wrote to me, "that I would give my very soul for one draught. I have again and again gone out from the room, when brandy has been in use, for I dared not trust myself near it. One night I threw a nearly full bottle out of the bedroom window, and only thus saved myself from yielding. These depths of dread and despair even now make me shudder to recall them, and it seems to me impossible to make another human soul understand or realise them, unless indeed by a similar experience. During a severe attack of influenza, one of my fellow missionaries, thinking only to soothe my cough, brought me an egg emulsion into which some spirit had been put. Without a thought I drank some, and then recognised the taste. Even that tiny taste roused the latent desire, and God only knows what I suffered for some days after. But I can truly say 'Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Do you wonder that my love to Him is so deep and strong?"

It is upon this personal love of her soul that I must insist, for here and nowhere else is the machinery of the miracle and the attestation of Divinity. Through a long night she cried with agonised entreaty:

"Wilt Thou not make, Eternal Source and Goal!
In Thy long years, life's broken circle whole,
And change to praise the cry of a lost soul?"

And the dawn came; she saw the morning light; and now, in the words of her favourite poet, she thus expresses the joy and certainty and peace of her faith:

"I walk with bare, hushed feet the ground
Ye tread with boldness shod;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
The love and power of God.

I see the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within;
I hear, with groan and travail-cries,
The world confess its sin.

Yet in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
I know that God is good!

And Thou, O Lord! by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me if too close I lean
My human heart on Thee!"

This blind faith in the power of an invisible God, and this profound love for a personal Christ, is unintelligible to scepticism. But from the dawn of history has there not been a groping of human hands into the darkness and mystery of Existence, and has there not always been a long-

ing of the human heart to love something higher than itself? Are we to take no account of these aspirations, which have coloured the whole orb of human history and given to the life evolved from the cell all its poetry, all its beauty, and all its sublimity? Because Darwinism cannot account for Beauty and Music and Mathematics, are we to regard these things as superstitious, hallucinatory, and unworthy of a man's regard? Is George Stephenson a reality, and Shakespeare a phantasm? Are we to set our affections on Pasteur and Lister and Marconi, and not on Michaelangelo, Wordsworth, and St. Augustine? How many will be left of the immortals if we strike out the name of every man who, like the great English poet, has said:

> "And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things"?

Is materialism, indeed, the way, the truth, and the life? Has it overlooked nothing, examined everything, and explained all? Are we to believe that the vast legions of humanity which have

passed across this globe affirming that God answers prayer, that Christ has visited their hearts, and that they are assured of a life beyond the grave—are we to believe that this great and glorious host was but a phantom army, following a Chimæra, deluded and deluding? Surely it would be well for modern scepticism to abandon this colossal arrogance out of mere modesty, to become, if it is possible, "as unassuming as Socrates," and to bring itself to that condition of realism wherein one is able to perceive that the soul of St. Paul, the heart of Shakespeare, and the mind of Milton are as greatly and as truly facts of existence as atoms in metals, corpuscles in blood, and fossils in rocks.

For nearly two thousand years men and women of high intelligence and great range of feeling have professed their conviction that God answers prayer and that Christ confers blessing. They have persisted in these affirmations against the obstruction of the world, in the face of disaster, and amidst the derision of scepticism. And from the lives of these men and women have come the highest ideals and purest poetry of human existence.

Here in our own day we have a witness to this ancient faith. A woman marked out by destiny for a terrible destruction, becomes through the love and tenderness of a Christ-minded friend, healed of an incurable affliction, transformed

from misery and dejection to happiness and ecstasy, and gives herself with an ever-increasing satisfaction of soul to the work of this same Christ, so improbable and unreal to the dark mind of infidelity. Suppose that she, too, had embraced the agnosticism of materialism—what must have been her fate? And do not the nobility of her life, the luminous brightness of her soul, and the fervent gratitude of her heart, convince us even more than the miracle of her healing that she is following no ghost and worshipping no Phantasm? Is joy the child of hysteria, and nothingness the cause of peace?

She has given me a book of Whittier's poems, and her pen has traced lines of emphasis under certain of the verses which express her aspiration and her view of the Christian life. Consider the purity and peace of a soul which after such a tempest as she has known can settle itself in these words and live them in her life:

> "If there be some weaker one,
> Give me strength to help him on;
> If a blinder soul there be,
> Let me guide him nearer Thee.
>
> . . . .
>
> Clothe with life the weak intent,
> Let me be the thing I meant."

I would it were in my power to breathe into these pages the sweet mirth and happy brightness of this soul which was once plunged deep

into the abyss of dejection. I wish that I could give to these last words something of the spell and fragrance of her character, something of that blithe and buoyant gladness, which shines in her eyes, sounds in her voice, and communicates itself in all the thousand kindnesses which make her busy life. For it is the happiness of her soul which seems to me the most compelling proof of the miracle. She is so cheerful, even so merry; so gracious and pleasant; so delighted by the simplest happiness of others, so devoted to children, and so happy in their mirth—that one is tempted to doubt, not the miracle, but the madness and the melancholy which once all but destroyed her. Is it not a beautiful thought that this woman is especially loved by children, and that her influence for good in the East is chiefly among young girls who learn from her the story of Christ and who adore her as a mother? Those who are acquainted with children will know that their affection is seldom given to the wicked and never to the melancholy.

"I feel sometimes," she told me, "almost overwhelmed by my consciousness of God's blessing. That He should have saved me is mercy enough, and that He should have given me work to do for Him is blessing enough; but that He should have given *me* the love of children, and placed it in *my* hands to prepare these children for His Kingdom—this overwhelms me. You

can understand how deeply I love my Saviour, and how it is, when I am quite alone after the day's work, I often find my eyes full of tears and my heart almost breaking with gratitude."

Among the marked verses in the book which she has given me I find:

> "To Him, from wandering long and wild,
> I come, an over-wearied child,
> In cool and shade His peace to find
> Like dew-fall settling on my mind."

# BETRAYED

AS pretty and pleasing a little girl as ever began life without adequate knowledge of the world passed one day from the shelter of an English orphanage for the children of soldiers into the very dangerous and difficult experience of domestic service.

She gave every promise of growing into a pure and happy womanhood. She was by nature bright and intelligent; by training, industrious and orderly. There was nothing at all in her appearance, nothing at all in her mind, to suggest the brazen face and the bold nature of a public woman. It would have shocked even a man of the world to think for a moment that this so virtuous and so innocent-looking girl—this girl whose candour, honesty, and respectability showed not only in the neatness of her dress and in the general note of her appearance, but in the clear goodness of her eyes and the modest manner of her speaking—could ever see moral corruption, could ever descend to the sink of iniquity, could ever illustrate the pain of Shakespeare for "maiden virtue rudely strumpeted."

But the orphanage, which had stood to her for father, mother, and home, which had trained her so carefully to be industrious and painstaking, which had given her a definite bent towards respectability, and had distilled into her mind at least something of the fragrance of religion, had forgotten to warn her against temptation by teaching her to know the realities of this hard world and to expect the oppugnance of this cruel life. She was full innocent in experience; too innocent in knowledge.

It was the very purity and sweetness of her nature which brought her headlong to a terrible ruin. She trusted the man who made love to her, trusted him so innocently and divinely that she could think no evil of him, and when he left her, and her baby was near its birth, so ghastly and shattering was her disillusion that she swung clean round from innocence and purity, and headed straight for pravity and a hopeless despair.

Nothing is surer than this, that the rate of a woman's progress towards profligacy is almost invariably the swifter and the more despairing according to the measure of her original innocence. It is this knowledge of a woman's nature which makes one understand the tremendous earnestness of that awful warning written in three of the gospels: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were

better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." I invite any man disposed to take a tolerant and casual view of sin to follow in this narrative the consequences of an act for which the world is most ready to make excuses and find forgiveness. Let any man whose mind is poisoned by a foolish cosmopolitanism, or whose knowledge of science leads him to think that "we make too much of sin," answer the question when he has come to the end of this true story, Is it a light thing to seduce innocence, to betray faith, and to destroy purity?

Because she had been so happy in her virtue and good name, this girl—turned out of service to have her baby born in a hospital—became infinitely guilty and shameful in her own eyes. She hated herself, felt in every fibre of her being the smirch and scarlet of pollution, and believed it hopeless and impossible that ever she could be pure again.

The child died, and she stood alone in the world; a girl with the brand of shame upon her brow, without a friend of any kind, surrounded by a righteousness which opened no door to her and an iniquity which stretched from every side welcoming hands. She was not only shame-full, not only in despair of herself; she was also bitter with cynicism. She had been betrayed.

She began the dreadfullest life to which a woman can come—the easiest in every city of the world for any forlorn and despairing girl—almost as innocently as she had gone into domestic service. She thought it would be possible to walk about the open streets and encounter some man who would provide for her and be as a husband, but without the law. She had no knowledge either of the great riot and luxury at one end of this scale or of the awful misery and destitution at the other.

It was her experience to ascend from somewhere in the middle of this scale of sin to its mocking highest. She was young and pretty and honest. She was different from most of the others. The coarsest men were disposed to let her alone; the less brutal were inclined to be interested in her. One of these men more or less fulfilled the original idea in her mind of a husband outside the law. He took rooms for her, provided her with money, set her in the way of making a figure at music-halls and supper-rooms and race-meetings. The excitement of this fashionable existence gradually took possession of her whole being—all but one little corner of the conscience—and she began at last to fret no longer at lost innocence or to weep over the simple peace of her finished maidenhood.

She was waited upon by the daughter of her

landlady, a little girl who was in every way the opposite of that which she herself had once been. This child was a veritable little slattern, and impudent, and daring, and careless of all authority and decency. The fashionable woman of easy virtue occasionally beguiled a tedious interval in her engagements by talking to this little brat; she was kind to her, too, making her presents of money, and sweets, and clothes; very often she would say things intended to warn the child against the misery and wretchedness of what must have seemed in her eyes an entirely luxurious and idle life. She would very gladly have made a friend of this little untidy girl, but there was something hard and mocking in the child's nature which always prevented intimacy.

There is one relief to which these lonely women, particularly the English, sooner or later go for comfort and oblivion. Drink not only helps them to keep up the frightful lie of a "gay life"; it ministers to their hunger and thirst after forgetfulness in the long hours of their loneliness when memory is free to work without distraction and conscience can make itself heard. But it is this very means of appearing vivacious and gay, which sooner than anything else, sooner even than the terrible life itself, dislodges them from a circumstance in which it is most easy to be merry.

She began to drink in secret, and presently she found herself neglected by former friends, and forced to look about, sometimes very anxiously, for the means of daily bread. One night she was returning home from the emptying midnight streets, when the Sister of the West London Mission, whose uniform and purpose were just becoming known to her, gave her a flower, said a kind word to her, and passed on when she saw that there was no response.

From that day, for six years of bitterness and misery, the once perfectly pure and wholesome girl who might so easily but for the crime of one man have been all that we reverence and honour in our mothers, walked the hard streets of London and descended almost to the last extremity of the harlot's life. Her days of prosperity were gone. The comfortable lodging, the fine clothes, the fashionable appearance in the box of a music-hall, the excitement of a race-meeting, the gaiety of a crowded supper-room, the pleasure of visits to seaside and foreign cities —all were gone now, gone with the full purse and the generous friends, and she was become— still so young and pleasant to look upon—a walker of the streets, a hunter for food, and a pariah in fear of police.

If her betrayer could have seen her now, what would he have felt in his heart? If he could

have seen the change in her face, all the innocence sponged out, all the faith and childhood driven from her eyes, all the kindness and purity destroyed from her lips; if he could have seen her accosting smile repeated a thousand times backwards and forwards on the midnight streets; if he could have heard her laughter in the tavern, watched the reel of her steps homeward, seen the tears of her misery wet upon the pillow, and penetrated to the ruin and despair of her hardening heart—would he have thought that he had done a small thing, would he have said easily that it is the *métier* of God to forgive, would he have felt unafraid to meet the judgment of God?

Again and again, bitterly and with many tears, she lamented her life and wished to God that she had never been born. But this remorse had no movement towards the repentance of religion. She never felt that there was pity for her in heaven or that in her own poor wounded heart there was possibility of love towards God. She was simply sorry for having been such a fool, simply angry with herself for having made such a wild shipwreck of her life, simply wretched and miserable because it was so difficult and heartbreaking to make a living. Everything that might have made her penitent and clamorous for Heaven's love had been destroyed by her betrayer with the ruin of her innocence.

She was in this frame of mind when one night, tired of walking up and down the crowded streets, sick of looking up with forced invitation at the face of every man she passed—in a frame of mind no more despairing or disgustful than any she had known for many a long month—the poor, weary girl, making sure that no policemen were about—went and stood for mere rest of body in one of the doorways of Piccadilly, her eyes looking up and down the street for the chance of employment, her thoughts more occupied with her tired body than with her wretched soul.

As she stood there, a woman walking slowly along the thinning pavement, suddenly paused, and then quietly approached her. She was dressed in a uniform and carried a single flower in her hand. The girl in the doorway recognised her by the light of the street lamp. It was Sister Mildred of the West London Mission —a name she had often heard in taverns and at street corners, a personality of which she had heard favourable gossip and one or two tales which had made a slight impression on her mind.

The Sister came close to her. "This is my last flower," she said; "would you like it?" The girl in the doorway took the simple gift, and said, "It's six years since I was given a flower." Then she added, "It's six years ago

since a respectable woman spoke to me." The Sister looked at her. "Who gave you the flower six years ago?" "The Sister who was here before you?" "And you are still here?" "Yes, still here." "You are not very happy; can I do anything for you?" "No; there's nothing to be done." "Perhaps there is; think about it, at any rate; you know where I am to be found, don't you?—come and see me some day; come to tea with me?"

The Sister passed on; the woman returned to her lodging, looking for business, with the flower in her hand.

Some months afterwards the Sister was sitting in her flat when a ring came at the bell, and opening the door she saw a girl standing there whom she did not immediately recognise. She invited her in without a question, and when they were together in the sitting-room, the girl said, "I don't suppose you remember me, but you once gave me a flower in Piccadilly, and I told you it was six years since a respectable woman had spoken to me. You asked me if you could do anything for me, and I said 'No.' You said that perhaps you could, and invited me to come and see you. I have come now. I want you to help me. The flower you gave me has brought me here. It wouldn't let me rest."

Then, her poor broken heart soothed by the love and tenderness of the Sister, she told the

story of her new birth; and for beauty and simplicity, this story is matchless in all I have read or heard of conversion.

The girl had returned to her lodging, miserable and tired, and after placing the flower in water, had gone to bed and slept. When she woke in the morning, the first thing to meet her gaze was the flower of Piccadilly. She looked at it, and recalled the incident of the doorway. She thought of what the Sister had said to her, and of what she had said to the Sister. Then she thought of the flower itself. She looked at it, let her eyes rest upon it, and became gradually aware that she was interested only in one thing about it. The flower was white. The idea of this whiteness pervaded her consciousness. She surrendered all direction and control of thought to receive into her mind the single idea of whiteness shining from the flower at her bedside. It interested her to dwell without effort upon the thought of whiteness.

Then, quite slowly and without violence of any kind, there was a gentle and almost unconscious transition of thought from a mere dreamy contemplation of the flower to the gradual establishment of a contrast. She made a contrast of the whiteness of that flower and the spreading darkness of her own soul. She said to herself, "I was once white, like this flower."

A deep sadness took possession of her. She was unable to prevent tears from rising to her eyes. She looked at the white flower through a mist of pain, and said to herself, "I wish I could be pure." Then she covered her eyes with her hands, turned her face to the pillow, and wept. It was impossible; she never could be pure again.

She told the Sister afterwards that when she went out into the streets to earn her bread the thought of the white flower was insistent in her mind, like the voice of a guardian angel, like the unsilenceable whisper of conscience. It made her work a ghastly torment of the soul. She tried to get rid of this obsession in the company of other women gathered in a wine-bar. It remained. She drank, she listened to stories of last night's adventures, she tried to laugh, she kept a forced smile upon her lips, but her thoughts were held by the same persistent idea. It would give her no rest.

She went out into the traffic of the streets. In the midst of it all she was still pursued by the thought of the white flower. It was like "The Hound of Heaven," unescapable and pitiless; she could not dream that the divine Voice would ever say to her—

> "All which thy child's mistake
> Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
> Rise, clasp My hand, and come."

It was almost as a mock of her foulness, almost as a scorn of her unalterable shame, that the thought of the white flower followed every step she took and pursued her haunted way—

> "With unperturbèd pace
> Deliberate speed, majestic instancy."

And yet all the time she was dimly conscious of a hope, timorously aware of some shadowy possibility of escape. The thought of the white flower might mock her ruined soul; but, could she not in some way shake away from her life its present misery and at the same time dislodge from her mind its present obsession? For days, for weeks, for months, long after the flower was dead, she wrestled with this obsession and brooded on this hope; and at last she saw her road clear to a way of escape. She abandoned the streets. She took a humble room and became a "sempstress" to a man living in the Temple. This was her one way of escape, and she thought that she was no longer horrible and base, no longer disreputable and abandoned, but a woman doing the best she could with a ruined life.

She was satisfied with the change and connected it with the flower, which had become no longer a torture to her thoughts, but a fragrance to her amended life. But dwelling on this flower, she saw presently in her mind, with

a gradually increasing light, connection between its whiteness and the religion of the woman who had given it to her. She looked away from the contrast of the flower's white purity and her own iniquity, and perceived that the whiteness of the flower shone in her memory with the human-kindness and the loving purity of the giver. No longer a contrast; she matched the white flower of Piccadilly with the white flower of a blameless life.

Then it was, after all these months of her flower-haunted existence, that she felt in her heart a yearning to go and see the Sister and tell her what the flower had done. Remorse had vanished, a peace like the calm of forgiveness had entered her soul. She no longer frequented taverns, she no longer walked the streets, she no longer mixed with abandoned women, and she no longer cared anything for the excitement and dissipation of the harlot's life. She had become religious. She said her prayers; she desired the mercy of God and the love of Christ.

There had never been throughout this long and gentle process of spiritual change the least degree of violence, the least degree of turbulence. Quite simply and naturally and evenly she had passed from a seemingly inevitable indifference to religion; and as simply, naturally, and evenly she had come to a quiet pleasure in what she

deemed the only virtuous life now possible for her soul on earth. A white flower had effected this immense change. It had nothing to do with the exhortation of a preacher, terror of hell, or fear of God. As invisibly as fragrance, the whiteness of the flower had passed into her soul, and gently, tenderly, and sweetly turned it to God. She was a man's mistress, but she was religious.

We witness a miracle quite different from the cataclysmic effects of a sudden remorse. It is a case of conversion in which every man who has fought the battle of the soul may see at least something of his own experience. "A sunset touch, a fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death." The smallest accident, the slightest emergence, the most trivial occurrence—"And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears." Perhaps for every record of a violent conversion, there are in the knowledge of the angels a million instances of silent change and gradual approach to God. One does not live very long without knowing that the great drama of life is enacted neither in the columns of the newspapers nor at the penitent's form at revival meetings, but in the unbroken silence and impenetrable solitude of the human heart. And it is none the less a miracle that the light which strikes suddenly and blindingly into the soul of some, should steal gradually and almost invisibly into

the hearts of others. To be born again is not always to experience a sudden and vehement alteration of habit and thought; far more often is it a growth in character so smooth and tranquil that the converted soul can never declare to itself a particular moment or a particular experience in which the surrender was made and the illumination became conscious.

The true criterion of conversion is its effect upon life and character; by that standard alone can we measure the extent of the miracle. In this case there can be no question of the miracle. Sister Mildred, who stands for a reproach to the public women of West London, but who is their truest friend when they turn away from sin, is nothing of a sentimentalist, nothing of a mere humanitarian. She did not receive this penitent Magdalen with tearful embraces and words of an hysterical emotionalism. She kept her calm eyes fixed upon the girl's face, listened to her story, and acknowledged the influence of the white flower. Then she said, "But you will not stop where you are?—you will give up this man and live a pure life, will you not?" The poor girl was startled and hurt. Was she not living a pure life? Had she not given up a life of shame? She said her prayers, she wanted to be good, she would rather die than go back. Surely she was respectable.

Then the Sister said something which reveals

the immense difference of Christianity from any other religion under the sun: "But you are injuring the man's soul."

The girl was quick in reply, so sure of her justification: "But I love him! He is not like other men. He is a gentleman. He is quite good and kind. I would give my life for him."

"If you love him," said the Sister, her eyes still fixed steadily upon the girl's face, "why do you do him harm?"

And from that point she spoke of religion. The mere question of morality was undiscussed, was passed over and neglected as a matter of no account. Not in the region of controversy, where morality must always reside, did the Sister permit this awakening soul to hang in the twilight of obscurity. Very gently, very tenderly, but with an irresistible leading, she carried that soul into the full light of unquestionable religion, made her think not of comparative respectability nor of disputable standards of conduct, but of spiritual responsibility, of immortality, of God's provided way for the salvation and ultimate holiness of the human soul. The penitent girl, content with her renunciation of profligacy and comfortable in her devotion to a man who was kind and good to her, who had felt a blessing in her soul and a restfulness in her heart from the influence of the white flower, looked no longer on the manner of her life from

the world's shifting and transient point of view, studied no more her way of living from the desires of her own heart or the ideas of her own mind, but beheld her soul from the high altitudes of divine reality, and could not be complacent, could not be at rest, could not be satisfied.

Morality has as many codes as there are climates, as many text-books as there are temperaments, as many consciences as there are weaknesses in human nature. It has no foundation in natural law and can give no rational explanation of its objective. Its laws are written not on tables of stones, but on tables of wax. It is dumb when challenged for authority, and unintelligible when pressed for motive. It is a convenience, not an aspiration; a regulation, not an incentive; an instruction, not an education. It is content with the policeman, and sees no need for a Good Shepherd. It would prevent men from committing crimes, but lifts no finger to make them angels. It is the oleograph in painting, the guide-book in letters, the model lodging-house in architecture. It is without poetry, without feeling, without emotion. The whole spiritual nature of man is untouched by it. The evolution of humanity, it limits to the inventions of the engineer and the discoveries of the surgeon. It turns a stiff back upon the beauty and passion of nature; and its attitude towards the mysteries of existence is without reverence, without won-

der, and without inquiry. A nation can no more safely commit its destinies to the moralist and the ethicist, than a garden be left to the labours of a man whose only care is for the fences and the paths. Morality can only dare to do without religion so long as public opinion is religious. Remove the sanction of religion and conscience is without authority, and without conscience all is chaos.

One sees in this story the vast and unbridgeable gulf which separates morality from religion. The moralist, whether he approved or disapproved of the girl's relation to her keeper, could not have invented any reason to shake her faith in the satisfaction of her condition. He might even have been challenged to decide the comparative morality of continuing in a relationship unrecognised by the law, or of adding to the congestion of a wage-earning labour market. One may even doubt if he could have satisfactorily explained why the girl should not live on the public streets, so long as she did not drink to that point of excess injurious to her health or demanding a policeman's interference, so long as she did not steal, so long as she did not commit murder, so long as she did not spread the contagion of disease, so long as she put by for a rainy day. But certainly he could have done nothing at all to make her surrender a protector to whom she was purely and tenderly devoted,

or said anything to make her welcome a long future of hard service and mean wages in exchange for a life of pleasant idleness and selfish satisfactions.

This is what religion did for the girl first led by the whiteness of a flower to think about the difference between good and evil. She surrendered herself into the hands of the West London Mission, went into the Home where rescued women are trained for service, and with a body braced by healthful toil, a mind recharged with its original vigour, and a heart so completely changed that never again could the powers of the world destroy in it the Cross of Christ, passed out into the toiling ranks of humanity, a pure woman and a daughter of religion.

She has stood a long test, and is now still in domestic service, her character sweetening as its experience of purity deepens, and her heart strengthening as its knowledge of religion widens. There is nothing in her story to suggest hysteria. There is everything in her present condition of soul to manifest the power of religion.

With one incident, showing something of the vicissitudes and drama of life, we may conclude this narrative of a slow and unviolent conversion. She took service as cook some years ago in the house of a lady living in St. John's Wood. She gathered from her fellow-servant soon after entering upon this situation that the establishment

was not respectable, although from the registry office she had received nothing but assurances of good. She was undecided as to what she should do, and so far had seen nothing to confirm the suspicions she had heard, when one day she was told by her mistress to prepare a dinner for several guests and instructed to assist the other servant in bringing in the coffee. During the dinner she heard gossip from her fellow-servant concerning the grand dresses of the women and the gaiety of the men, but nothing more; she thought only of her duties. At the conclusion of the meal she followed the parlourmaid into the dining-room with the coffee. How she managed to get round that room, she told the Sister, she does not know, and cannot now imagine. Her whole physical strength seemed to collapse and her mind to run out of her control. For there at the table were men she had known in the earliest days of her fall, and in one of the women she recognised the little slatternly girl who had waited upon her in those days of evil and luxury. And she discovered that this girl was the daughter of the house.

She had become servant to her former landlady, and she waited as a pure woman on the girl who had waited upon her in the days of her impurity.

## OUT OF THE DEPTHS

HER father died when she was beginning to help in the home. Her idea of the world was impressed upon her consciousness by a narrow and gloomy alley, surrounded whithersoever she bent her steps by roaring roads and seething streets. Her idea of life came to her from the dark interior of a crowded home, where a good-natured and easy-going mother diversified the occasional struggle to make things clean and tidy by more regular efforts to keep up a good heart with the aid of a neighbouring publican. If she had any thought of religion it was inspired by the general respect and dread which her father and mother entertained towards the Roman Catholic priest. If she had any conception of joy it came from the alcoholic hilarity of her parents.

Born and bred in the slums of London, accustomed from earliest infancy to grime and squalor, interested only in the games of the gutter and the tricks, illnesses, and petty feuds of her brothers and sisters, stupid with the torpor of a neglected intellect, her affections stunted and crippled for lack of employment, the whole nature of the

child suffering inarticulately and without consciousness, this poor, miserable, and bedraggled sparrow of East London was just beginning to run errands, to handle a worn broom, to use a ragged duster, to make a loathly bed, to peel potatoes, and soothe the cryings of the latest baby, when the greatest event which ever befalls the very poor—the one event which stirs the muddy ooze of the slums and startles the thoughts of the dense millions packed together in that miasma of poverty and destitution—happened in her wretched home and set her life into a new channel.

She was first frightened by the dead body of her father lying so blue and motionless upon the bed; then she was interested in the importance which death conferred upon the home; then, terror-stricken by the information that, because of this thing called death, she was to be sent away from her mother, her sisters and brothers, and the vile dwelling which was her only anchorage in a world plainly antagonistic.

With scared feelings, a torn heart, and eyes red with weeping, the mite entered one of those numerous institutions of the Roman Catholic Church where orphans and the children of husbandless women are educated in the discipline of the Latin Obedience and trained to earn their living as domestic servants. The big place, crowded with neat and quiet children, and over-

ruled by women in the strange and somewhat frightening dress of Sisters of Mercy, at first bewildered her, made her conscious of an almost intolerable isolation; but soon, with the adaptability of a child's nature, so soft and pliable that it can be squeezed into any mould, the little thing fell into her place, perceived what was expected of her, and made timorous beginnings at friendship with two or three of her companions. Her one clear memory of those days is associated with no religious idea, with no subject of education, with no game, with no particular task, with no friend; she remembers the tremendous necessity of being always absolutely quiet. Noise was a crime.

At the age of fifteen, with her intellect somewhat brightened and her ideas of cleanliness and propriety entirely revolutionised, she was sent out into the world to make a beginning at the main business of terrestrial existence, the earning of daily bread. She became a little maid-of-all-work to a lady living in the suburbanised country beyond the smoke of London.

This woman was one of those monsters who occasionally make an appearance in the law-courts. Her case deserves the careful attention of psychologists. She was a strict Roman Catholic, a moral woman, and a devoted wife. But there was in her nature a stress towards cruelty, and this tigerish instinct, complicated and en-

tangled by the fervour of her religious faith, fell upon the most innocent and defenceless person of her environment, the little maid to whom, by all the dictates of humanity, she should have stood as a mother.

The case is of peculiar interest because of the religious element. The woman would at one moment fall upon the child and cane her about the arms and legs, and at the very next moment, while her breathing was still agitated by the infliction of punishment, would drag the child off to her bedroom, make her kneel at the bedside, and there these two mortals—the hysterical woman and the bruised child—would recite the Pater Noster, the Confiteor, and the Nicene Creed. Imagine the angels looking down!

The cane was bought after some weeks of a more ingenious torture. To twist the child's arm till it was at snapping-point, and then sharply to strike the screwed elbow with a clenched fist, was the earliest form of punishment; but the satisfaction that it brought to the woman lacked in vigour. There was a tempest in her nature. Her next invention of discipline was to hold and press the child's right cheek with her left hand, while with the other hand she smote slowly, strongly, and fiercely the left side of the face and head. The child remembers how her teeth used to grid under these blows.

I asked her what it was which brought this

punishment down upon her—was it clumsiness, untidiness, slowness, rudeness, or obstinacy? She has now no reason in the world to fence with truth, and she told me quite definitely and also with a most convincing good-humour and spirit of forgiveness, that she believed it all came about through her being so noiseless and quiet. The virtue of the orphanage became the crime of the suburban villa. "We were taught," she told me, "to be very quiet in the convent, and I think it irritated the lady. She used to spring upon me when I was doing my work, and slap me, beat me, twist my arm, and take me off to pray with her, never saying a word as to what it was all about."

The suffering of this child was perfectly well known to the husband of the woman and also to the cook. Neither of them ever interfered.

She began to regard religion rather callously. She had never felt the least love for a divine Father, she had never had her affections in the least stirred by the life and death of Christ; her feeling towards the invisible Powers had always been one of fear—God a ghostly, spying, and tyrannical demon-policeman: the next world, a possibility of hell. But now, dumbly mutinous against her savage mistress, and instinctively conscious of some frightful degree of unreality in those panting prayers at the bedside, she began to think a little for herself, began to shake off

the clinging authority of the convent, began to leave God alone and to consider how she could best look after her own life. She did not definitely renounce faith in what she understood to be religion; but gradually and quite unconsciously she began to be one of that innumerable company who leave the consideration of the next life till it makes an appearance.

At first she said nothing to anybody about her canings and beatings, but at last, finding her mother more and more sympathetic as poverty pressed closer to her, the drudge told the story of her strange mistress on the rare and delightful occasions of her visits home. The mother did not fly off to avenge her daughter, did not express any loud and passionate indignation; she contented herself by many wise shakings of her head and by a very portentous expression of countenance, occasionally remarking with a sad and sorrowful sigh that some ladies are "like that," and God Almighty has a deal to put up with.

But the girl was neither middle-aged, nor widowed, nor alcoholic. She was young, robust, good-looking, and on the threshold of conscious womanhood. She found domestic drudgery a poor employment of youth; she began to think that her body had other uses than to serve as a flogging-post.

She made a suggestion, which appealed to the

mother's need and also to her principal desire. Why should the mother work so hard and for so poor a dole, when the daughter could easily support her by needlework? The mother earned precarious shillings by the sloppy labour of a charwoman. She had to go great distances to her work. She was not physically strong. Fogs and wet weather tried her sorely. Her greatest ambition was to sit still and do nothing. The daughter suggested that this ambition was no dream of millennium. Let it be decided at once that she should come home and work for one of the numerous tailors in the neighbourhood.

In this way came an end to canings, arm-twistings, and prayers. Liberty came in the shape of long and toilsome labour, but it was sweet, and, for the first time, life seemed to be a possible delight. As a tailoress she earned fifteen shillings a week, and for years she gave her mother every week fourteen of those fifteen shillings. A good daughter, tidy, moral, sweet-tempered, and cheerful; but entirely without the sense of religion, entirely satisfied with the narrow hopes and common desires of a poor neighbourhood; a girl little likely to make shipwreck of her life, and as little likely to draw near to the mysteries of the spiritual life.

Her romance came when the mother was still alive. A man of extraordinary physical energy, a typical free-lance of London's labour market,

fell in love with the good-looking tailoress and they began to bill and coo in the intervals of their bread-earning. He worked in the morning as a porter in Covent Garden, and at night as a scene-shifter in a theatre. He was one of those men who are perfectly happy while they are earning "good money," who are enthusiastic and untired while they are working as their own masters, and who become slack and disheartened if ever they have to fall into the ranks and work, like the agricultural labourer, for a regular wage. This man could do with little sleep, wasted no money on drink, insured his life, hoarded his savings, and had ever an eye open for the main chance. He could never understand how any man can be willingly idle, was himself never more unhappy than in the intervals separating one job from another, felt himself most a man when he was most busy and carrying the biggest weight.

These two people married; both of them hard-working and moral, typical, one would say, of London's respectable, honest, thrifty, painstaking, and quite unimaginative working classes; a man and woman seeking money and desiring respectability; proud of their home and best clothes; happy in their prosperous struggle for existence; content with the conditions of their life; untouched in any lifting or saving way by the great mysteries of life; as truly Christless as the im-

moral, as truly Godless as the atheist. Both of them stood at as great a distance from anything approaching to religion as from anything descending to depravity.

Three children were born to them. The struggle for existence became a little harder in consequence; that is to say, they were not able to cut quite so fine a figure in the neighbourhood. The children were not unwelcome, but they were a drag on the wheel of prosperity. There were days when the competing claims of necessity and luxury bothered the brain and vexed the heart of this hard-working housewife. She was never in the least degree unkind to her children; on the contrary, her tendency lay in the direction of spoiling them; but she found, with increasing regret, how it costs many shillings a week to bring up three children in London with their faces towards respectability.

"Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; Adversity is the blessing of the New." There are few tests of character so searching and so discovering as this material prosperity, after which all men, save those best able to endure the victory, seek so industriously. "Prosperity is not without many fears." On the face of things this man and woman, with their comfortable home and three thriving children, advertised the success of thrift, industry, and all those other moral virtues which without religion are

as dangerous to character as the intemperance of vice. They might have been held up to the envious observation of the dissolute and base by societies for the promotion of thrift, self-help, and civic decency. They might have been exhibited in all the cities of the world as the fruits of a successful civilisation which has prosperity for its final goal and law-abiding respectability for its god. But below the surface of things there was a weakening of moral fibre and a dreadful atrophy of the spiritual life. The struggle for prosperity saved them from depravity, but the spirit in which that struggle was made carried them in a direction as clean contrary from the objective of existence as depravity itself.

The curse of prosperity came home to roost when the industrious husband died, and the woman was left to face the business of life with all the vigour gone out of her moral being and nothing in her soul wherewith to confront the devastation of death. In the days of her distress, when she toiled all day to support her mother, she had been at least resourceful, confident, and courageous. But now, fat with prosperity, and flaccid with the corruption of a merely material and quite vulgar respectability, the stunning blow of death struck sickly paralysis through a moral being sapped of all enduring foundation; she was left weeping and lamenting, grieving and complaining—as feeble and as poor a thing as

ever found itself against the oppugnance of natural laws.

The popularity and thrift of the dead man tumbled a dish of gold into the widow's lap. The insurance money and a "whip-round" at the theatre brought momentary fortune to the bereaved family. No little group of humanity ever mourned in stiffer black and deeper crape; no funeral obsequies were ever carried out in that neighbourhood with greater emphasis of Rochefoucauld's famous gibe. Respectability kept up its head in widow's weeds of the richest material. The devastation of death was defied by the milliner and undertaker.

But grief will have its way; and its way in this case was watered by perpetual tears, was marked by a continual self-indulgence and an effortless resignation to the altered fortunes of the house. So long as the gold lasted the way was easy, and never once did the poor widow need the support of alcohol. It sufficed her to sit still and weep for the dead man, to miss his step upon the stair, to recall his kindness, to burst into tears at sight of his empty chair, to utter lamentable fears for the future of her fatherless children. But the day came when the gold was all spent; the day came when the cupboard was almost empty; the day came when the landlord called for an overdue rent. When the rent is overdue, it is the beginning of the end

for all very poor people. It marked a milestone in the life of this widow.

A year had gone by since the husband died. The year of mourning had been gradually growing a year of need. From the day of the grand funeral to the day of the landlord's visit, the wolf had been pressing with ever greater weight at the door. Starvation and ruin did not come at a bound, but when they did finally reach to the dulled consciousness of the woman, they had all the force and dismay of surprise.

She went through the usual sad business of being "turned out," utilising all the delays of the law till the last moment, weeping over her vanishing furniture, abusing the landlord with a fierce energy, and finally marching in a kind of stage triumph to the workhouse, with the boast, loud enough for all the neighbours to hear, that *her* children should never walk the streets.

So far in the story there is nothing but respectability and misfortune; no hint from beginning to end of insobriety and shame.

At the workhouse she parted from her children, and set out to earn her own living in a spirit of greater rage against providence and her landlord than of anxiety to make a home for those whose tears were still wet upon her cheeks. She was roused from her stupor, she had recovered at a spring something of her old energy, but she was entirely without that quiet of the

spirit which alone can give poise and direction to a driven soul. She was burning with a hot indignation, not with the pure flame of her motherhood; she was mindful of her wrongs and injustices, not of her weakness and her folly.

She went to one of the more decent lodging-houses in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden, paid for her bed, and joined the sisterhood of sad and lonely women in the common kitchen. She bore so many marks of her old respectability that she attracted the favourable attention of these drifting women of the gutter, who are always ready for a tale, always inclined to a gossip, and who like nothing better in conversation than an opportunity for woe-begone reference to "better times." They made much of her, showed her kindness, indulged her with commiseration, and stimulated her with encouragement of their down-at-heel philosophy of life. The parting from the children at the door of the Union was the subject which moved all those poor women's hearts towards the new lodger—the unbefriended woman who had stepped, in a moment, from a home to the gutter. One of them told her a way of earning money, and offered to teach her the business. Sometimes it paid, sometimes it didn't, but on an average it worked out the expenses of the lodging-house. It was the business of a flower-seller.

"All the heart," she says, "was took out of

me—no husband! no children! I was glad to do anything; so I took up with flower-selling."

The two women rose early and hurried to Covent Garden market. The teacher was no longer the gossip of the common kitchen, but a hard, vigorous, alert, and boisterous woman of action. It takes a shrewd head and a rough tongue to buy flowers cheap enough in the market to be sold at a profit on the kerb. The widow was perplexed and bewildered by all the noise and struggle and confusion; she was also filled with admiration for the knowledge and address of her new friend. When the business was done, the flowers all bought, tied, stacked, and ready for exhibition in the gutters, the vigorous teacher proposed a glass of ale, and moved off to a public-house through the crowd of porters, salesmen, flower-sellers, and loafers thronging the littered streets. The widow could do nothing but follow.

"Never till that day had I tasted beer," she tells me; "and it was a long time before I could screw up my courage to drink. Every time I raised the glass to my lips, the smell got into my nose and made me feel quite sick. And yet I didn't like to look a fool before all the people, and I wanted to be friendly with the woman who was helping me. But how I ever drank that glass of ale I can't tell. It was the first I had ever drunk; and I wish it had been the last. It

seemed as if my whole body turned against it. I couldn't swallow without that feeling of sickness, and when I had swallowed, I had to shudder as if I was cold."

There is something tragic and pathetic, I think, in the figure of this poor slack victim of respectability, standing in a crowded tavern, and beginning her experience of the gutter, beginning her plunge into the abyss, with a glass of beer which nauseated her whole being, and which she yet needs must drink to gratify the friend of her distress. She had fallen on evil days, her heart was taken out of her, and in the bitterness and upheaval of her wrecked life she had found this one sturdy friend who, without price, was willing to teach the difficult way in which a poor woman can earn bread. Out of the purest gratitude for such friendship she screwed up her courage and finally drank, as a child drinks medicine, the glass of kindness, the glass, for her, of ruin and direst woe. Banish from your mind all thought of the sordid scene, the sloven people, and the mere glass of ale; think of it only as the drama of a soul passing through the experience of this planetary life, and you will see this forlorn and dejected spirit, like the hero in Schiller, "leaning on the bending reed of vice over the gulf of perdition."

How trivial the occasion, how appalling the consequences! From that day the morning glass

of beer after the harassing work in the market became a regular breakfast; the first dislike of it—as though her spirit had sought to warn her through the nausea of the body—vanished altogether; pleasure in the taste gradually grew to delight in the effects; delight in the effects grew more swiftly to a craving for the thing itself; finally it became to her everything in life.

Her descent was headlong. The first step with a woman is not easily taken, but once taken, swifter than any man, with an entire abandonment of everything that saves the soul, she pitches to destruction. This poor woman was the last person in the world, one would have thought, ever to lose hold of respectability, even if her hands held only the rags and tatters of it; but she loosed her fingers of everything that is above the pool and sank like a stone to the slime of its despair.

She became one of the dirtiest and raggedest human scarecrows that ever showed bleared eyes, shining cheeks, and a loose mouth in the gutters of London. She sold flowers, or shelled walnuts, or ran errands on her broken boots, with no other purpose in her soul than the quest of beer.

"It was a craving," she tells me. "It wouldn't let me rest. Bread and meat—I couldn't look at them; but beer I had to have or I should have lost my reason. I often used to have food offered me. I couldn't even look at it. My whole

body seemed to turn against eating. It was drink, always drink. I don't believe I was hungry for years, never once. But except when I was sleeping, I was regularly burned up with thirst."

She came to living in the lowest of doss-houses. With her dress in grimy tatters, her boots broken on her feet, her bonnet battered out of all shape and meaning, her face a terrible witness of alcoholic poisoning, her speech a blubbering, grinning, hiccoughing duet of hilarity and misery, she fell in with the lowest of women, the most despairing of humankind, and passed into the likeness of that degeneration and marasmus which is said by science and politics to be beyond the reach of reclamation.

I asked her about the women she encountered in the doss-house during this dreadful time. "Most of them," she said, "were women deserted by their husbands. Some were very bad, but I never met one that wasn't kind. You'd see a woman in the kitchen eating a packet of fried fish as though she was starving, turn and give a bit to some other woman who was sitting by the fire with nothing in her lap. You'd hear many a kind word spoken. And they weren't bitter. Nearly all would lay the blame on themselves. We used to sleep eight in a room, and there was one woman in the room where my bed was who used to go off to sleep every night crying to herself, and saying, 'Oh, my poor

children! Oh, my poor children! I'd be so good to you if they'd only let me come back.' That was one of the things they liked to talk about more than anything else—the children they'd left behind them. Many a time I thought of my three. And first of all, when the drink was getting a hold of me and I felt that everything was beginning to slip out of my hands, I tried hard to make a fight of it, for their sakes. I said to myself, 'This is getting a habit; I must shove my will up against it.' But it was no use. I did try. I thought I could push against it. But it seemed to get worse the more I tried, and so I gave up trying altogether, and just let myself go."

One seems to see very deep into the abyss of degradation, looking down upon that unknown and homeless woman in her lodging-house bed, and listening to her whimper of, "Oh, my poor children! Oh, my poor children!" She used to fall asleep, night after night, with that sigh upon her lips. Stranger and perhaps farther-reaching cries from the human heart ascend to heaven out of the abyss than from the decorous places of respectability and refinement.

Who was she? I inquired, and the story of her life was told to me in a sentence: "Her husband was living with another woman; he had turned her out on account of the drink."

Do they ever talk of religion, these derelict women of our common lodging-houses? Yes;

but always as something attaching to the old and buried days of their respectability. "We used to go to church regular. . . . The clergyman often came to see us. . . . My children were all confirmed, all but the last; we were too poor then." They speak of religion as they speak of the best parlour, a fine bonnet, or money in the savings bank. The morality of the Christian revelation seems to have penetrated into the remotest places of civilisation; the inspiration of that religion—a passionate love towards God and a hunger and thirst after holiness—seems to be nowhere understood.

But the miracle happens, and it happened to the drunken and degraded woman of this narrative. She was deep in the abyss. The effort to set her will against the habit of alcoholism had been made, and abandoned. She was conscious of helplessness. Her powers of control had perished with her respectability. The craving had become master and tyrant of her life. She could do nothing but sink.

A small thing saved her. She was walking home to the lodging-house one night, drunk and dazed, her senses obscured in the fumes of her poison, her soul apparently weighed down and suffocated by the crushing depression of her general misery, when the sound of voices singing a hymn to the accompaniment of an ancient harmonium came to her from the upstairs window

of a dark building on the opposite side of the road. She did not stop; she did not raise her face. Through the gaslit murk of the gloomy street the wretched, drunken harridan lurched upon her way with no sign, with no knowledge, that a mystery was at work upon her soul. She entered the kitchen of the lodging-house, sat for a little while with the Miserables, and then went to her bed, saying nothing of a new thought in her mind, knowing nothing of its power. She only knew that she had heard invisible men and women singing a hymn, the rhythm of which was somehow familiar, somehow sad, somehow haunting. She fell asleep thinking without direction and without management of this accidental tune.

In the morning she woke with a feeling of exceeding misery and dejection. She felt how unhappy she was—how lonely, how friendless, how homeless, how hopeless. Oftentimes enough she had emerged from sleep with all the physical wretchedness of alcoholism; but now there was something added to this weakness and heaviness of the body; she felt herself, very definitely, to be "consciously wrong, inferior, and unhappy" —the first condition, according to Professor William James, of spiritual change. The tune of the hymn seemed to float upon the muddled obscurity of her despair. She was aware of it in a dim and dull way. She associated it with

this self-knowledge of hopelessness and misery. It seemed as if it wanted to make her cry.

There was one obvious way out of this dejection, the familiar trodden way of her destroying habit. She went to the market, earned enough money for drink, and hastened to her favourite tavern.

But that day something lived in her soul over which drink had no power. She forgot her depression, but she could not forget the realisation of her terrible condition. The tune of the hymn kept haunting her with the remembrance that she was consciously wrong, inferior, and unhappy. The more she drank the more clinging and clutching became the obsession of this new knowledge. It was as if some devil kept holding a mirror before her, turning it to confront her every way she looked. There was no escape. She saw herself wherever she directed her gaze. She saw the ruin and havoc, the corruption and shame, the vileness and horror, of all that had once been her pride and pleasure. But it was unalterable. Who could take the stupor out of those dazed eyes, who could strengthen those loose and vinous lips, who could give back the firmness and vigour of her hanging flesh? The rags which clung about her, the glaze upon her skin, the torpor of her brain, the nauseating sickness of her soul—these things were all as unchangeable and fixed as the leopard's spots—

they were a part of her existence, they were her very self, nothing could alter them.

For some days she continued in this wretched state, drinking as hard as her money would allow, eating nothing, and abandoning herself to the most hopeless despair. She was as near the midnight darkness of the Thames as any poor wretch in London.

Then there came a voice to her, "loud as a bursting sea," with clamorous appeal for life not death, for hope not despair, for goodness not evil. It was the voice of her own dying soul. It was the cry of her own perishing spirit. She heard it with all the terror of a wild self-knowledge. Now at last she saw the full horror of her condition. Now at last she was aware of ruin and of doom. To escape from destruction, to save her own life, became suddenly a fierce and insurgent passion. She turned instantly, by the whole instinct of her perishing soul, to religion. She wanted to fling herself into the saving arms of a sheltering power transcending everything she knew of life.

The men and women whose voices she had heard singing a hymn from an upper window, held twice a week an open-air service at the corner of a vile street in that neighbourhood. She had seen them many times without giving a thought to their purpose. She had noticed the bright and girl-like face of the Sister in

charge of this Mission without ascribing any mysterious power to her. But now, in her despair, she thought of this little company of street missionaries, thought of them without any care as to what church they represented, thought of them only as servants of the Christ who saves sinners, thought of them as the only people she knew in all London who represented the shelter and salvation of that vast Power into whose arms she so passionately hungered to cast the burden of her weakness and despair.

Her coming to the meeting in the open air is remembered to this day. The crippled woman in her bath-chair, "the only carriage lady in the Mission," was the first to be aware of her presence. The drunken flower-seller pushed through the knot of listeners, stumbled against the bath-chair, and stood there, breathing hard, one hand on the arm of the chair, her bloodshot eyes fixed upon the preacher. She was recognised as "one of the worst flower-sellers from the lodging-houses." They thought she had come to interrupt the meeting. There was ferocity in her manner, because the roused spirit was intent. She was blear-eyed, red-nosed, red-mouthed, the hair hanging about her wild face. Some one went to her, and asked gently but reprovingly, why she had come. She answered, "Because I want to be good."

That was all. She said nothing more. The

commonplace words expressed the motion of her spirit. It was the London flower-seller's form of saying, "I will arise, and go to my Father." From the depths of the abyss she looked upward; from the isolation of a far country she turned her face towards home. She wanted to be good.

At the end of the meeting an appeal was made to all wretched and unhappy souls that they should declare themselves, there and then, in need of a Saviour. They were asked, those who were unhappy and sad, those who wanted the comfort and love of a divine Saviour, to hold up their hands. The gathering flame of the naphtha lamp shone upon two hands black with the toil of walnut-picking.

The young Sister in charge of the Mission went to the side of the flower-seller, touched her, said kind and encouraging words, and led her away. The two women, a moment ago separated by a great gulf, were now close to one another, sisters of the same humanity, looking upward to the same overshadowing Fatherhood of the universe. They could speak soul to soul. They could understand each other's language. They could kneel side by side in prayer.

The great promise was boldly made and longingly believed. God answers prayer. There is nothing He cannot do. Earnest prayer, even from the gutters and lodging-houses of London,

reaches to the invisible centre of the universe and moves the Hand of God. The answer comes—sometimes immediately, sometimes gradually, sometimes after a long and ennobling discipline; but always prayer is answered. Did she believe this? Yes, with all her soul! Did she feel that God could take away from her the craving for drink? Yes, she believed He could. Did she truly and earnestly desire to lead a new life, at all costs, whatever the hardships, however long and bitter and heart-breaking the struggle? Yes, yes! there was nothing she would not endure for that gift from God—a new life!

In some cases the desire for drink ends immediately with the first cry of the soul. With men this is often so; the records of such instantaneous healings are numerous and convincing; I have investigated many such instances of immediate conversion years after the moment of illumination. But with women the process of new-birth is more often difficult and slow. A man, by the very force of his nature, appears to project his soul further into the Infinite at the moment of repentance than does a woman, whose plunge into perdition is generally more sudden and despairing. It is one of the most interesting and instructive discoveries in the study of religious experience to find how very often the answer to prayer is long delayed, and comes at last so gradually that the actual moment of re-

lease cannot be marked. In some cases it seems that the very violence of instant answer which is necessary to save a particular soul, would produce only hysteria and that state worse than the first of which we have the divine warning.

With the flower-seller the answer to prayer came quickly but not immediately. It was immediate in this respect, that the burning and uncontrollable appetite of her disease ceased to torture her from the moment of her cry for help. But a tendency towards alcohol was left; an occasional desire to drink visited her mind; she never felt in the least disposed to plunge again into drunkenness, but was conscious from time to time of the feeling that drink would make her more cheerful, help her to lead the new life. These occasional whisperings of temptation were overcome by prayer.

The desire for a new life was fed and tended by the Sister. The bright prospect of reunion with her children was perpetually held out to the soul struggling towards righteousness. She says that this longing to possess her children grew stronger with her every day, that the old abandonment to depravity utterly ceased, that she felt herself consciously moving towards strength of will and fixity of purpose.

She put herself into the hands of the Mission to be trained as a servant. They encouraged her to think that she should work to support her

children. When she had made sufficient progress they brought the children to see her. She knew, then, that God had saved her.

For the second time in her life she went out to service. The contrast in her condition is striking. On the first occasion she was wholly innocent, wholly moral, wholly without the religious sense. And on the second occasion she was a woman who had lived in hell, who had bedraggled and befouled her soul with the very dregs of depravity, and yet was profoundly conscious of God.

She was no longer called upon to endure the tyrannous cruelty of a mad mistress, but her situation was one which might have sorely tried the resolution of a soul less firmly established in the strength and power of regeneration. She was not happy, but she was able to support unhappiness. A quiet peace took possession of her; she enjoyed doing her work well; she could smile to herself at the thought of seeing her children every week; she looked forward to the service of the Mission, and would sing the hymns aloud in her kitchen. It was not difficult to put up with a mistress who was for ever interrupting useful and hard work with silly and mean fault-findings. She felt herself in heaven. And then came an end to this fresh experience of domestic service. She found herself admired, sought, and courted by one whose proposal of marriage was

so full of the promise of happiness that she could not refuse it. She is now a married woman, the excellent manager of a comfortable home, the devoted mother of her children, and once more the delighted servant of Respectability, but with the knowledge that " one thing is necessary."

I can see in her face all the havoc of her past life; the whole countenance is marked by a weakness and a feebleness which, one thinks, will never pass away; the fineness of her clothes, the great cleanliness and neatness of her appearance, cannot in the least disguise a marked heaviness of face and body which express unmistakably the torpor and lassitude of enfeebled character. But my feeling of disappointment and anxiety about her when we first encountered, passed away from my mind when she turned to the Sister and answered some question about her experience of prayer. Then the poor weak face became touched with a nobility which smoothed away all traces of the past, the dull eyes quite shone, and a most gracious sweetness to which I could never penetrate in conversation, irradiated the instant smile with which she answered so eagerly and so gratefully the Sister's question. Deep in her soul, hidden from observation, and inarticulate to all mankind, there lives, I believe, something of that spiritual surety which makes the joy of the saints.

## THE CARRIAGE LADY

THERE is a little community of the West London Mission which meets twice a week in the room of a Board School, and after the singing of hymns and prayers for God's assistance, goes out into the open air and holds a service in one of the wretchedest streets east or west, north or south, in the whole of the metropolis.

There is a Sister in charge of this community; she is quite young, with a girl-like face, beautiful bright hair, and a manner of the most captivating cheerfulness. The others are young people of a humble class, workers for a small wage, who in shops and factories toil all the day, and are beset on every side by the cares and temptations of such an existence. They meet twice a week to sing and pray in the Board School and to go out afterwards into the lamplit streets to testify to the power of Christianity as a giver of happiness. They are missionaries of Christianity.

Among these humble people there is one older than the rest, a woman of forty, crippled, deformed, and dwarf-like, who sits in a bath-

chair at the open door of the room in the Board School—the chair is too wide to enter—and afterwards, still in her chair—for she has no power of motion—occupies a place with the little group of humanity in front of the hymn-sheet at the street-corner. She lives far away from the scene of this Mission's activity. Two of the young men go twice a week to the place where she lives, carry her down the stairs, place her in the carriage, draw her to the Board School, lift her, chair and all, up three or four flights of winding stairs to the room, and after the meeting carry her down again, take her to the service, and afterwards bear her back to her distant dwelling. They never complain of this labour. Mr. Price Hughes described this interesting person many years ago as "the only carriage lady in the Mission."

She is so malformed, as regards her body, that even her hands, with which she earns her living as a tailoress, are shrivelled and contorted in a manner which startles the sight and hurts the feelings. She appears to have no neck; the head stands in the centre of surrounding shoulders. The diminutive body ends abruptly, and dwindles away into an utter incapacity. Nevertheless the shape of the head is noble and dignified; the face is not shrunken, but broad and full; there is a sense of great power in the large eyes; the mouth is firm;

the chin energetic, the nose finely shaped; the whole expression of the dark-skinned countenance is one of strength and resolute ability. In repose, she is handsome and ruggedly refined. When she smiles, which is very often, the face becomes lit with all the drollery and flashing quickness of wit which distinguishes the true Cockney. Her conversation is a perpetual banter and a constant *persiflage*. She speaks with a bewildering rapidity, clipping her terminations, slurring her punctuation, and getting to her point with a laugh, sometimes derisive. She is the good-humour, common-sense, cheerfulness, and impatience of sentimentalism which preserve the very poor people of London from despair and save them from revolution. When she converses with you, her eyes search yours, watching for the mood on which she can best strike home the wit or the maxim your conversation has suggested to her mind. The perfect mobility of her body at such times intensifies the energy of her face. All her gestures are in the movements of her eyes and the lightning of her expression.

I made her acquaintance one night in the room of the Board School. It was an evening of torrential rain. The young man at the harmonium, near the window, repeatedly exclaimed, in the intervals of hymn-singing, that it was "no go." The others ranged round the

room whispered that perhaps the rain would stop in a few minutes. The Sister remarked that it would be dreadful if they were stopped from going out into the street. "Let's have another hymn," said the carriage lady briskly; "it's sure to dry up before we've finished. Number thirty-six; that's a beauty."

At the beginning of our acquaintance I had asked her whether I could not move the hymn-sheet so that she might see it from the doorway. She looked up at me, smiles in her eyes, the lips down-drawn by amusement, and snapped, "Know 'em all by heart. Course I do!" And from that moment she was singing with energy and no little sweetness, never stumbling for a word.

The rain fell and fell. "Not a bit of good," said the man at the harmonium.

"Let us pray," said the Sister, and knelt down at the table. The little company turned round and knelt at their chairs. The carriage lady closed her eyes. Then the Sister prayed, simply and naturally, and at the conclusion of her petition there was a general Amen, very earnest and quiet. A pause followed, and I was expecting a rising from the knees, when a voice quite close to me, exceedingly low and wonderfully sweet, raised itself to God. It was the voice of the cripple, praying in her chair from the doorway.

The prayer struck me as one of the most beautiful I have ever heard, not for its language, but for the haunting sweetness of its sincerity. Perhaps the pathos of her physical condition was in some measure the true author of this impression; perhaps the general atmosphere of that little room, with its quiet prayerfulness and its kneeling occupants, while all about on every side were the wretchedness of London's misery and the depression of unceasing rain, deepened and intensified the effect. But there is no question that the simple petition of this poor crippled woman in the doorway made upon one's mind a more than ordinary impression, and its memory is still fresh and vivid many weeks after the occasion.

She prayed in this manner: "Almighty and Most Merciful God, our Heavenly Father; grant we beseech Thee, if it be Thy will, that the rain may cease and that we may go into the streets, to tell the poor people of Thy great love towards them, manifested in the life and death of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. And if it be Thy will that we should not go, teach us, O Lord, not to be sad and unhappy, for Thy Holy Spirit can be there without our aid, and can lead all those poor people, better than we can do, to the knowledge of Thy love. O God, we pray Thee, send Thy Holy Spirit into the streets this night; touch the hearts of un-

happy people; turn them away from sin and misery; make them to feel that Thou art love. Teach the cruel parents to be kind to their children, and lead the weak and foolish away from temptation. Save them, O God, from all their dangers. Make them to know Thee, the only true God. And this we beg, in the Name of our dear Saviour, Thy Son, our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ."

One could not listen to that prayer, uttered in a tone just above a whisper, quickly, earnestly, almost passionately, without being deeply moved and profoundly impressed. I had heard that her influence in the streets was extraordinary; that blasphemy and ribaldry became silenced at her rebuke, and that molestation held its hand at her entreaty; I had heard how the worst of people, the most desperate characters of that neighbourhood, men and women alike, respected this poor sufferer, and how she was so well known and honoured that policemen and cabmen would salute her as they passed.

But now I was more curious than interested. I watched her one evening in her bath-chair at the street-corner, surrounded by all that is most dirty and degraded in London, and I heard her singing the hymns there, with her eyes raised to the black skies; and saw her praying there, with the eyes closed, the head bowed, the words of her supplication drowned by the innumerable

clamour of the street. At my side, leaning against the closed shutters of a shop, were men of ill-appearance, with hard faces and fierce eyes, the clothes stamped with all the marks of a degrading destitution. On the opposite side of the street was a many-windowed public-house, bright with gaslight, the doors open, the various compartments filled with an identical swarm of dirty but hilarious men and women; at an upper window, dressed in a white blouse, her arms resting on the edge of a flower-box, was a barmaid listening to the hymns and watching the people. Next door to the tavern was a butcher's shop, the meat set out in trays under the spouting gas-jets, the butchers walking or lounging in front, sometimes calling their wares, more often regarding the Mission service with faces of amused disdain. Everywhere, from side to side of the houses, were grimy children, shouting and screaming at their play, occupying the whole road with chalked-out spaces, settling their disputes with abuse at the top of the voice and blows with all the force of fury at their back. Occasionally these grimy children would throng round the hymn-sheet, gape at the printed words, glance at the preacher on the rostrum, and then with an impatient and disgusted, "Oh, come on!" dash back to their play. Through this herd of noisy children passed constantly solitary figures, men with grim faces, women with

streaming hair and blotched skins, some of them walking like spectres, others stumbling and swaying like the swine of Epicurus—a few of them glancing with dull interest at the missionaries, some of them tossing their heads in a scorn that was almost hatred, most of them passing into the darkness without a sign of anything.

While the preacher was declaring in the midst of this clamour, and surrounded by all this indifference and mockery, the story of Christ's revelation and the power of Christianity to save the worst people from sin and to make the most miserable people happy, I saw a sight just at the corner of the street, which made me feel for the moment sick with disgust. As sunken and degraded a woman as you can imagine, all rags and dirt and dishevelment, drunk at the point of grinning foolishness, singing and laughing and staggering, a jug in her hands, her shawl hanging backward from her head, her discoloured face and glazed blue eyes luminous in the gaslight, came round the corner of the street, and was just in my view, when a dog sprang at her, and growled and barked at her, as though she was something too vile and loathsome even for that dreadful place. It was the contrast between dog and woman that struck me. The dog was a noble collie, brown and white, its coat brushed, its body well nourished. It had conscious dignity, conscious intelligence,

beauty of form, and a superb grace of movement. Its bark was contemptuous and indignant. One saw in its spring towards the woman the force and energy of an outraged sense of grandeur, a recognition in the harridan of something vile and scandalous which it resented. And the woman received this disdain of the dog with amusement. She stood still, stooped her dreadful face almost to the dog's level, and began to bark at it, laugh at it, grin at it, thrusting the jug towards it, making little springs towards it on her broken boots, glancing up at the people for their applause of her courage and her humour.

It was a vile spectacle, and I turned away from it, sick with disgust, to encounter the eyes of the cripple in the chair, which were full of kindness and hope.

Curiosity about this interesting woman, a feeling almost of affection for her whimsical and valorous nature, led me to seek for the ways and means which had brought her into the wonderful field of religious action. Why, I asked myself, was this noble-faced woman, with her poor crippled body, praising God at a street-corner; while that other woman, befouled and befuddled, barked and grimaced at a dog which disdained her depravity? What influences had surrounded her in childhood? through what mental changes had she passed

in her narrow life of toil and hardship? by what means had she come to feel convinced that it was her duty to serve God in the street?

The story is brief, simple, undramatic; but it brings home to one, I think, all the more unchallengeably for its simplicity, a truth very necessary for scepticism to reflect upon in this matter of conversion—that the beginnings of new birth are often trivial, the growth in religious knowledge is almost unnoticed, the moment of illumination never determined, and the character of the after-life, a completely changed and a wholly converted life, as free from mental disturbance or hysteria as the process itself.

She was born in a crippled condition, of poor parents, in a very shabby and neglected quarter of central London. Her childhood was marred by her deformity, and she felt her disability with all the suppressed resentment of a child's impulsion towards joy. There was always a struggle to get a living in her family, and of this she was made aware in several ways. Life appeared to her from the very first an oppression and a misery. She was taught to work as soon as she was old enough to thread a needle, and on the tailor's board this little deformed child would sit from morning till night, helping to earn the family's bread. She was taught nothing at all about religion. In a shadowy

and never contemplated manner, she felt that religion stood for something poetical, nonsensical, and unreal; something which had no connection at all with crippled bodies, tailoring, and nights of sleepless pain; she never gave it a thought.

She was often very ill, and towards womanhood these attacks of pain and weakness increased. The mother had a sister living in a small Norfolk village, and writing to her on one occasion she mentioned the cripple's condition; and the answer to this letter was an invitation for the girl and her brother to visit the aunt.

Now this aunt was kind but fussy, religious but without attraction. She was far more concerned for her visitors when she discovered the state of their souls than when she first caught sight of their white faces and hollow cheeks; she was far more distressed when she heard their conversation than when she saw their untidy habits and the marks of the boy's dirty boots on a clean floor. She set herself to lighten their darkness, to improve their manners, and to nourish their poor bodies. In the last respect, she succeeded; in the second, she had an indifferent success; in the first, she failed.

All that she said about religion struck the Londoners as unreal and ridiculous. They listened with their tongues in their cheeks. When they

were alone, they laughed at the old woman. To them the great and real things, visible before their eyes, and delicious in their hearts, were the wide pastures, the green woods, the moving waters, the splendours of the sky; they loved birds and butterflies and animals; every hedgerow for them was full of adventure and enchantment; they could not have enough of these things; every mention of religion was tiresome, a restriction, the powder of grown-ups in the jam of youth. So it came about that when their aunt told them to go to chapel on Sunday, and saw them off from her door, the brother said at the first bend of the road, " You needn't go, if you don't want to. You can say we went. She won't know." And they played truant, and told a lie, and thought nothing about it.

A new excitement was presently provided by the arrival in that part of the village of a caravan. It was owned by a captain retired from the army, who with his wife went up and down the country as missionaries of the Christian religion, talking to the people, giving them tracts, and holding open-air services. The van naturally attracted the attention of the two Londoners, and as naturally the deformed body and suffering face of the London girl attracted the sympathy of the lady missionary. She made acquaintance with the poor girl, interested her in the caravan, talked to her about religion,

gave her a tract, and asked her to come to the service.

"What that lady said to me," narrates the cripple, "made no more impression on me than rain on a bobby's cape. I didn't understand a half of it, and the other half didn't seem to me to make sense. I just let her talk, looking down on her for a crank in my mind, and not worrying my head about the matter one little bit. She came and saw me several times, talked to me as per usual, and every time it was just the same—I thought she was trying to get at me, and I knew jolly well I wasn't having any! But, do you know, after she had gone away, I began to think about her! She kind of haunted me. I couldn't remember a thing she had said, mind you; not a single thing; but I could remember her face, every smile in it, her voice, all the music in it, and her manner, which was something so beautiful I can't describe it to you. I got thinking and thinking about her, when I was out in the fields and when I was lying in my bed, till her lovely face was as real to me as if I had it before my eyes. And I thought, How sweet she was! How kind she was! What a lovely lady she was altogether! It's very strange, but it's true, as the Lord knows, that my heart was touched for the first time by the smile in the lady's eyes, by the music in her voice, by the kind way she had of looking at me and talking

to me—and not by any single word she said! And what do you think happened? I began to pray. I never said a word to any one, and of course I couldn't kneel down, but I used to close my eyes and pray to God that I might become like that lady! Yes, that was my first prayer. And the more I prayed and the more I wanted to be sweet and kind like her, the more I felt how different I was, the more I seemed to feel that I was something dreadfully inferior. That was how I got to know something was wrong with me. I didn't know what it was. All I knew was this—that Mrs. —— was something pure and sweet and nice, and that because I couldn't feel myself like her there must be something wrong with me. I seemed to feel that God loved her, but could never love me. That made me think hard. It didn't make me afraid. It just made me think—only very hard indeed. I began to feel a desire, a regular hunger and thirst, for God's love. I wanted to be better, so that He *could* love me. I knew that if I could only be like Mrs. —— He would bless me and surround me with His love. But I was wicked, sharp-tempered, bitter, revengeful, foul-mouthed, foul-minded, as dark as a heathen. It seemed impossible that I should ever get to be like Mrs. ——, and almost hopeless that I should ever be different from what I was. But I wanted to be like her so much, and I was so ashamed of being

what I was, and the only way I could think of changing myself was by prayer, that I went on praying morning and evening, and all the day through.

"The first knowledge I had of the wonderful power of prayer came to me little by little; it didn't come all at once, and it didn't startle me when it came; it was marvellous, but it was as natural as growing up. I found myself quiet and peaceful in the brain. All the worry seemed to die away. It had been like a grey autumn day in my mind, all drizzle and misery, and now it was like a morning in spring. Very early morning, mind you; the birds hadn't started to sing, and the sun hadn't got right up; but it wasn't the night, and the skies weren't black, and there was freshness in the air and dew on the grass, and I seemed to feel all through me that it was going to be a lovely day.

"This was my first knowledge of how God answers prayer, and all my experience of prayer has been similar. The answer has come gradually, peacefully, quite quietly, as if it didn't want to make a noise and be found out. Of course I've seen people converted in a moment, directly they cried out for mercy; but with me it has always been the long way round, and that has suited me better than anything else.

"If I was to put it in a single phrase, I should say my first experience of answered prayer

was a gradual feeling of inward peace. All my anger at being a cripple went out of my mind; all my wishing to be this, that, and the other thing disappeared; and all my feeling of being bad went with it. I was restful, peaceful, happy.

"When I really appreciated what had happened to my nature, of course it made me think about the power of prayer; and thinking about this power of prayer led me to think about Him in whose Name all my prayers had been made. For the first time in my life I set about thinking of Christ, thinking of Him just as I had thought of Mrs. ——. I let myself dream, as it were; and my dreaming was about the Saviour, Who had lived on the earth with His disciples, and had taught men that God is a Father, that prayer is answered, that God loves sinners and wants to save them, and Who was always kind and gentle and meek, and Who yet had to suffer, and died so cruelly with all His enemies mocking at Him and all His friends afraid to be near Him.

"I think, but I can't be certain now, that it was the thought of His sacrifice which really gave me a changed heart. I thought about that till I lost myself. I remember it was always in my mind—how He had laid down His life, how He had borne suffering and death, all for the sake of other people. And when I say a changed heart, I mean a heart not only restful

and quiet, for that can be selfish enough; but a heart that cannot be at rest and cannot be quiet, unless it is doing something for the Saviour Who has done so much for it. I know that I began to long for some way of making myself His servant. I wanted to serve Him humbly and sincerely. I wanted to make other people, for His sake, as happy as He had made me. I didn't want to sit still and think of my own salvation. I couldn't have done that. If I had tried it, I should have been miserable instead of grateful. No; I wanted to be useful, wanted to spread the knowledge of His love, wanted to make His light so shine before men that they might glorify His Father which is in heaven. But what could I do? I was but a poor little cripple, bound to work from early morning till late at night for my living; I wasn't clever, I wasn't good to look at, and I couldn't get about—even if I had had the leisure to comfort unhappy people and try to stop the bad from living without God. So what could I do? Well, there was one thing. I could pray for God to show me how I might serve Him.

"And that prayer was answered, too.

"I was back in London, working hard, and just talking quietly at home about the change in my thoughts, and not knowing how I could serve my Saviour, but praying for it, when one evening I heard some singing in the street, and looking out of window saw a few people with

a harmonium at the corner, and heard them singing a hymn I knew. It came to me that here was my chance. Those people, I thought to myself, have felt what I have felt; they have been wanting to serve the Master; and this is how they do it—standing at a street-corner and reminding people by their presence that there *is* a God, that there *is* a life after death, and that Christ came into the world to save sinners. This is what *I* should like to do, and this is what I *can* do, if only I can get somebody to carry me down. And that is how I came to join the West London Mission, from its very start; and since I joined it I've been so happy I can't tell you what it has been to me. I don't suffer anything like the pain I used to do, and my mind is never miserable and moping. I feel as if I've got a meaning in the world, and the chance of being useful in life. And the people who come to us in the streets help me to be quite certain that we are serving Christ."

Here in this artless confession one has a story of an indubitable and complete conversion, which, thoughtfully considered, is as helpful and remarkable as any of those instantaneous and vehement instances of alteration in personality which are too often regarded as the sole illustrations of a profound spiritual change. One may justly challenge scepticism to explain how

such a revolution in character was produced by "natural causes"—auto-suggestion and the rest—and inquire whether it is possible for a change so deep and dispassionate, so gentle and rational, so tranquil and lasting—for the changed heart has "grown in grace" for more than twenty years—to be the effect of illusion and the fruit of a phantasm. But it is wiser than any challenge or inquiry addressed to scepticism, to reflect upon this narrative from the position of faith and to observe how nobly it illustrates a supreme truth in the religion of Christianity, and one which has been equally obscured by the philosophising tendency of theology and the repellent un-Christlike hysteria of revivalism.

The phrase "growth in grace" accurately describes the normal operations of conversion. It is none the less a case of conversion, where a man turns about slowly and gradually, and finds himself, without being able to mark the moment or to define the sensation, facing in a direction clean contrary to the march of his whole former existence. The miracle is there, though it be less apparent than in cases of sudden and violent alterations in character, when a man is, as it were, caught by the hair, and swung round in a dazzling instant from the very edge of destruction. To change habits, to alter character—however it be done—is always the work of some power which is not included and

cannot be included in the text-books of a logical materialism; but so to change habits, and so to alter character that the person is wholly transformed out of the likeness of his former self and becomes a new being conscious of quite other emotions, and conscious of a joy which only changes to deepen as the years advance, this can only be the effect of a cause beyond the definition of human reason and the operation of a power beyond the limits of human accomplishment.

And it is this great work which is everywhere being done by the religion which believes in miracle. Wherever Christianity makes its appeal to the heart, however crude the manner of its appeal and however un-Christlike its attitude to everything else, there you will find witness to this miraculous power. It is the appeal to the heart, and an unswerving demand for a cleansed heart, which not only accomplishes the miracles of Christianity, but which alone is Christianity itself. "Though ye believe not Me, believe the works." And the point I would insist upon is this—that overwhelming, quite overwhelming and unanswerable would be the testimony of these works, if all who preach the Christian religion to the world, and all the whole force of an organised and world-wide Christendom, were so directed as to bring home to men's minds this supreme aspect of Christianity, that it is a means

infallible and unconditioned whereby the heart may be cleansed, the joy of life restored, and the soul of a man born again.

"Too soon did the Doctors of the Church forget that the *Heart,* the *Moral* Nature, was the beginning and the end; and that Truth, Knowledge, and Insight were comprehended in its expansion. This was the true and first apostasy —when in Council and Synod the Divine Humanities of the Gospel gave way to speculative Systems, and Religion became a Science of Shadows. . . ."

It is the break-up of the speculative Systems which is now causing what is termed religious unrest. It is the recognition of the first principles of Christianity which can alone give back to the Church her enthusiasm and to religion its power. It is faith in the power of love and kindness, faith in the force and reality of prayer, faith in the invisible and miraculous operations of the Holy Spirit, faith in Christ as the only Saviour and Redeemer of humanity—it is only this simple and unquestionable Christianity which can cleanse the heart and convert the soul.

How much encouragement there is in this narrative for those devout people who desire to serve their Master actively, and who believe in the necessity of new birth, but who shrink, either from a natural nervousness or a hyper-sensitive-

ness of refinement, from the bold and difficult life of the preacher. For, the woman of this story, so changed, so sweetened, so illumined, traces her first misgivings of self, her first pure ambition, and her first consciousness of the spiritual life, to the influence of a kind face, a gentle voice, an attractive manner. How many men and women who followed the Christ would have confessed to a like beginning of the new birth! It is possible to work for the regeneration of men and to be the human means of the most profound conversions, without preaching in church or street, without even working with a particular religious organisation, provided that with all charity and all sweetness one goes among the lost and the unhappy, and ministering to the heart, makes it quite clear, yet without emphasis, that one's life is devoted to the service of a sinner-loving and a sinner-saving Christ.

Consider, too, from this story, how Christianity alone can bring blessing and joy, can alone adequately solve the problems of human life. Let it be supposed that the State had taken this crippled tailoress by the hand, had decreed that she should work only eight hours a day, had provided her with treble the wages she had hitherto earned, had placed her in a model lodging-house, had turned a graveyard under her window into an open space, had sent a band to

play there three times a week, had given her the certain hope of a pension in her old age, a sick fund in her hour of need, and a decent burial for the end of her mortality—suppose that all which it is possible for humanity, politics, and political economy to do had been done for this unhappy child, dare the most enthusiastic apostle of materialism asseverate that the character of the woman would be now so entirely lovable and sweet, that her heart would be now so absolutely full of peace, that her future would be now so unsparingly majestic, that she herself would be so noble and exalting and helpful a representative of human nature?

Christianity has to be insisted upon—most strange and lamentable to relate—as a blessing to humanity. It is not an opposition to political reform; it is a force which transcends political reform, and bestows a superior happiness. Political reform, where it is society organising itself without God, is an enemy of evolution, the subtlest and deadliest of dangers to human nature. It intensifies selfishness, it narrows vision, it pollards the affections, and it deprives growth of its most potent energy—the intuitions and seekings and aspirations of a man's soul. Christianity declares that in selfishness there is neither satisfaction nor happiness; it makes animal gratification not an end of existence but an enemy of life; it teaches that a sublime

forgetfulness of self, a searching compassion for the sufferings of others, and service to humanity of however humble, arduous, and unrewarded a nature, create a character and bestow a happiness so different from human nature that it is in very truth a birth into a new life.

Is it necessary to insist upon this shining superiority of Christianity? Against all the shouting and warring promises of political Utopias, one has but to set the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the pure. Blessed are the peacemakers." How vast the superiority! And against the enticements of a selfish and animal materialism, one has but to think, for a convincing contrast, of the life to which the blessing is promised—"I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." How inexpressible the superiority!

One does not mean, of course, that there is no call for political reform. One means that because so great is that call, the more imperious is the necessity for Christianising the reformation. And the beginning of all reformation lies at the heart and with the individual.

# A GIRL AND HER LOVER

IN her sitting-room Sister Mildred was writing letters. The open window, from which one sees neighbouring walls and distant roofs, admitted the sleepy spirit of an autumn afternoon. The noise of invisible streets, thinning in its aerial ascent, entered the apartment with a soothing dulness. Every time she finished a letter and added it to the little pile in front of her, Sister Mildred looked at the clock and was conscious of a desire for tea.

She was nearly at the end of her correspondence, when the loneliness of her situation and the monotony of the afternoon were interrupted by the ringing of a bell. She rose from the table, and went to the door.

A girl stood there whose manner betrayed a very genuine distress of soul. Without asking why she had come, or who she was, the Sister invited her in. "You are unhappy," she said; "come in, and let us talk about it."

The girl, who was trembling with nervousness and whose eyes were filled with a dreadful terror, suffered the Sister to lead her into the sitting-room. She was quite young, and, in spite of

her agitation, wonderfully pretty in an innocent and childish fashion. Nothing in her dress suggested the boldness of the courtesan or the vulgarity of the suburbs. The voice was gentle and caressing.

"I have heard about you," she explained hastily. "I thought you wouldn't mind if I asked you to help me."

The Sister made her sit down. "There is plenty of time," she said. "Tell me how I can help you?"

"I want to get out of this life. I have had a letter. It has made me wretched." Tears swam into her eyes, and her lips trembled. "It is from my mother." She produced a letter. "Will you read it?" she asked, and stretched out her hand. While the Sister was reading, the girl laboured to suppress her sobs.

The mother's letter, which was written from a country town, began by thanking the girl for a present of money, and proceeded to beg for a visit from this dearly loved daughter. "It is two years since I have seen you," wrote the mother, "and I do long for a sight of your dear face. Won't they give you a holiday so that you can come and see me, if it is only for a few days?" The letter closed with a mother's prayer to God for the protection of her child.

As Sister Mildred folded the sheet, the girl said, with a burst of tears, "Oh, I'm so wretched!

She thinks I'm in a shop. She believes that the money I send her comes out of my wages. If she knew——! Oh, she would rather see me dead than living this life! What can I do? I want to leave it; I want to be different; but I can't—I'm afraid. And when I'm miserable I drink, and drink makes me worse. I feel I shall go mad. It's getting more than I can bear. This letter—you can understand what it is to me. I love my mother."

The Sister said to her, "Try and be calm while I tell you something." She fixed her eyes on the stained and frightened face of the girl, and said, "After such a letter you must never sin again."

The girl would have interrupted, but the Sister proceeded, "And you need not."

It was a case which seemed, on the face of it, easy to cure. The pretty child was not hardened; she was kind, gentle, dutiful; she had saved money and sent it to her mother; she was conscious of shame; she desired to be better. There was only one difficulty. The girl was visibly the victim of alcohol.

Sympathy in such a case must go hand in hand with sternness. The drowning soul has to be reached at all costs. The enfeebled will has to be roused into action.

It was pitiful for the Sister to see this young girl, so broken and miserable, so kind and timid,

so modest and sensitive, sitting before her with all the remorse of the Magdalen, but with a poison in her blood and a cloud over her intellect, which made her as much a case for the doctor as a penitent for the love of Christ. She desired to take this poor child into her arms, to mother that wounded heart and console that frightened spirit, but the time for love had not come.

"You must not only hate your present life," she said quietly; "you must long for a better one."

"I do, but——"

"If you really long to live a good life, I can help you to begin it, at once."

"But——"

"It is quite easy. You need not return to the bad life for a minute. From this moment you can begin to live the better life. I can take you to a place where kindness will surround you on every side, where life is healthy and pure, and where you can be taught to earn your own living in a way that is honourable. Think! You will be able to go and see your mother. You will be able to meet her eyes without shame. When she kisses you, you will not hate yourself. Isn't that worth while?"

"I want to be saved. Yes, I should think it was worth while! But there's a man. I'm not free. My body is black and blue with his beatings. I'm afraid of him. He lives on my

earnings. He makes me go into the streets. Do you think he will let me go! He will follow me to the grave."

"You must not be afraid. No one can hurt you."

"He will get hold of me. I'm sure he will. I tried to get away from him before, but he found me and made me go back. Those men are terrible. You never get out of their clutches."

"If I promise to protect you, will you come with me? If I promise you that no one can compel you to live a bad life, will you believe me?"

"I am afraid of that man."

"He can't hurt you."

"Will you come with me to the flat? If I went alone he would never let me go. All my things are there. I don't think I should be so frightened if you came with me."

"I will come with you."

"You aren't afraid?"

"I am not afraid."

They started out and drove to the flat where this girl lived as the slave of a scoundrel. It was twilight. The lamps shone palely in the streets, and the pavements were crowded with people going home from their work. The sun had gone down in superb splendour and on the topmost windows of the houses there still

lingered the fire of his passing. A breathless day was followed by a still evening.

Only here and there in the block of flats where the girl lived did a light show in the window. The huge and smoke-grimed building, standing aside from the main streets, wore a threatening and forbidding aspect. It was like a prison. It had the smirch of iniquity.

The Sister knew that the whole place was given over to evil purposes. She knew that no help would be given from inside. In case of violence it would be necessary for her to descend to the streets. She was not afraid, but she was conscious of apprehension and a vague alarm. However many policemen may walk the streets outside, it is no easy matter for a woman to face one of these panders in the seclusion of his own establishment. But Sister Mildred is a saint, and there is no courage like the courage of the saint.

They mounted the stairs to the third floor. "You are sure you are not afraid?" whispered the girl. She was white and terrified. "There is nothing to fear," answered the Sister, and pressed her arm.

The girl opened the door with a latch-key. The hall was in darkness. She closed the door quietly, and felt for the switch of the electric light. The place was quite silent. In the dim light from the single lamp in the hall they made their way down a corridor, and entered a room

at the end of the passage. It was the girl's bedroom.

She turned on the light, and said, "I don't think he heard us."

"Perhaps he is out."

"No. I can feel that he is here!"

"Let us be quick. But there is no need to be afraid."

The girl began to open wardrobes and drawers. The Sister watched her, standing between the door and the scene of these operations. All the time that she was packing her belongings the girl was shivering like a person struck with a chill. She spoke in nervous whispers, expressing nothing but her terror of the man.

"Think of your mother's letter," said the Sister. "You ought to be happy. You are beginning the new life."

"I shall be happy when we are outside," said the girl.

The door opened. Sister Mildred turned her head. A man stood there, filling the doorway. He had one hand in the pocket of his coat; between the fingers of the other hand he held the stump of a cigar. He regarded the Sister with a frown which was a menace.

"I am taking Eva away," said the Sister.

"Indeed."

"She wishes to live a better life."

He put the cigar to his lips, and began to smoke. The girl continued to pack. He did not look at her, and she kept her back to him.

"It has been very close to-day," said Sister Mildred.

The man moved to a chair, and sat down. "We are going to have rain," he said.

"Yes, I think we are."

A bag snapped to, and there was the sound of a strap being pulled through a buckle. The man's income was passing away before his eyes.

"London is horrible in the autumn," he said to Sister Mildred.

"It must be beautiful in the country."

"I should like to be at Brighton."

The girl half-turned, with a bag in her hand. The man remained where he was; he did not look at her. Sister Mildred went to the girl, took one of the bags, and led her towards the door.

"We will go now," she said to the man, without stopping in her walk.

"By all means," he answered.

In the doorway Sister Mildred turned her head, and said good-bye to him.

He waited till Eva had passed through the doorway. Then he raised his head, and met the Sister's eyes. "Good-bye," he said, without moving from his chair.

In the rescue-home they saw how greatly this

girl had suffered at the hands of her bully. Her body was black with his blows and red with his canings. "When I came home tipsy, he would flog me," she told them; "when I came home alone he accused me of having wasted my time, and struck me."

One would have said that she was now in heaven. On every side of her were the tenderness and solicitude of holy women; her life was ordered by a cheerful and invigorating routine; the atmosphere she breathed was wholesome and pure; wherever she turned there was kindness; instead of a bully, she had good women over her; instead of the reckless environment of the streets she had the friendship and encouragement of courtesans who had turned from a like degradation and were praying their way to God. When she thought of her mother she could reflect, "In a few months I shall go to her; the past will be like a bad dream."

But there was one thing the home could not give to her. And this thing she desired, craved, and burned for, more than everything else. It was alcohol. More than God's forgiveness, more than reunion with her mother, more than purity, more than a new life, more than the hope of heaven after death, she wanted this poison called alcohol. And in order to satisfy this craving, she escaped from the home, and went back to the streets.

Three weeks had passed since she entered the home; three weeks of freedom from the bully's fists, three weeks of acquaintance with purity, three weeks of approach to God; then—driven by unconquerable mania, she went back to the vileness and the terror of her life of sin, for the sake of drink.

Sister Mildred was told of this sad end to her penitent's aspiration after a good life. She looked for her on the streets, but did not see her. She inquired about her, but no tidings could be heard.

One night a constable stopped her in Regent Street. The inspector at Vine Street desired to see her. Sister Mildred went to the police-station, and found the girl there—drunk and hysterical.

The police are wonderfully kind to these women. They do not charge them before a magistrate if there is the smallest opportunity of avoiding so great a catastrophe. Severity and rigour of the law are reserved for the procuress or for the well-known criminals who masquerade as public women. For young girls at the beginning of a life of vice, the police of West London have a genuine compassion.

Eva told her story. The bully had found her out and had carried her off to earn money for him. She was in his power again. If Sister Mildred would only take her to the home

once more, if she would only give her another chance, never—never would she go back to the streets.

It was quite clear that this girl's life would be exposed to the gravest risks so long as the bully was at large. Sister Mildred explained the matter to the police, and a course of action was decided upon then and there. The girl would be handed over to the Mission; the man would be arrested.

A change came over the girl when she learned that the tyrant of her life had been sentenced to six months' imprisonment. She appeared to regain the courage natural to her years and health; she lost something of the shrinking timidity which had hitherto marked her manner. The Sisters in the home observed with hope and encouragement that the girl manifested signs of a resolute will. She expressed with emphasis her determination to live the new life, never again to go back. There was more energy in the way she set about her work, more thoroughness in her accomplishment of the tasks allotted to her.

But with dipsomania there is always a great risk. The drunkard whose whole body is sodden with alcoholic poison, who cannot pass a day without drinking to a vast excess, who is, practically speaking, always in a state of intoxication, does not offer so hard a task to the physician as the man suddenly and completely

swept away at long intervals by an overmastering passion for drink. This is the true dipsomaniac, and doctors have told me that the true dipsomaniac is *never* cured. With the drunkard, the will consents to the madness; with the dipsomaniac, the will opposes and is swept aside. For weeks the dipsomaniac is free from temptation, feels no desire for drink, appears to be a person exercising the force of a conscious will; and then, suddenly—with a rush like the spring of a tiger, the will is swept clean away, the mind has no force, and the whole body is consumed by a blind and ferocious passion for drink. At such moments, I have been told by men of science, there is no power on earth which can oppose this madness. This is not true.

There is a power, how to name it I do not know, which gives the dipsomaniac sufficient energy to resist even these terrible moments of insensate madness. It is not a power which produces miracle, for there is always conflict; it is something so wonderful, so unknown by physicians, so unrecognised and undefined by psychical science, that one may describe it as superhuman; nevertheless, it appears so lacking in mercy, so wanting in the warmth of saving pity, that I dare not call it divine. It comes by prayer and aspiration, but it is not the might of God nor the sheltering love of Christ. Those to whom it comes, go down on their knees to

God, after the fierce conflict, and offer up a fervent thanksgiving for the mercy vouchsafed to them; but their bodies are wet with the strife, their limbs are trembling, they are so spent and exhausted that the prayer gasps from their lips. I have met men whose long craving for alcohol has vanished instantaneously at the moment of conversion; they have told me that in place of the craving they were conscious from that time forward of a very nausea at the thought of drink. But I have met others whose conversion has left just this single cell of the brain uncleansed; and every now and then, in the midst of lives so holy, so self-sacrificing, so devoted to the love of God that one may liken them to the saints, there comes the agonising desire and the only just resistible passion for the spirit or the drug. It may be that the power to resist comes from their higher self, that larger and subliminal consciousness which functions, it is hazarded, on the spiritual plane; but the blind man invited to accuse Christ of sin, replied, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see"—and these people, not troubling to discover and to define their means of safety, assure one that they pray and that the answer comes by prayer—one thing they know, that, whereas they were torn and rent by a very demon, now they are calm with the peace of God.

The risk in the case of this particular girl was considerable. She would go from the home into domestic service; it might be a part of her duties to handle the decanters and wine-bottles of her employers; the temptation would be thrust upon her; to resist it would be almost impossible. For the life of the streets not only destroys the purity of the body, it moulders and rots the force of the will. Sometimes it is a matter of years before the will is restored; sometimes it is irrecoverable. A girl may be saved from the dreadful life, may become perfectly virtuous and perfectly pure, and yet remain to the end of her days mentally weak, mentally deficient; and this is almost invariable where the girl has long been a victim of alcohol. The noblest chords of the physical organism are destroyed, and the spirit is powerless to express itself.

So the good Sisters of the Mission cast about in their minds as to what they could do for this threatened soul. While they drew her nearer and nearer into the circle of religion, while they gradually led her to feel in the idea of God all that her highest nature could imagine or desire, while they gently and sweetly presented at the beatings of her heart the thought of Christ as One Who had followed her in all her ways, pleading and waiting, and was now so happy in her penitence, so merciful in His

forgiveness—and while, at the same time, they encouraged her to take a pride in her work, to make all her tasks a sacrament of her gratitude to God, these good women were looking out into the seething world outside, so full of peril for this rescued soul, and seeking for her a place of security.

One day Sister Mildred came to the girl and talked to her about her mother, her life in the country, the days of her girlhood. Was there no one, in those days, for whom she had felt love and who had professed love for her? The lovers had been many, but light; of philandering she had had the ordinary experience of a pretty and attractive girl, in commonplace surroundings; of real love—no, she knew nothing.

"No man, then, has really ever asked you to marry him?"

"Oh, yes."

"But I thought you said——"

"Not in those days, not in the country."

"When you were in a shop?"

"No; afterwards."

"Do you mean——"

"Yes; on the streets. I met him one night, and spoke to him. He was shocked when he found out why I had spoken to him. He would not go with me, but we walked together. He asked me to give up the life. I said I couldn't.

He gave me some money, and went away. After that I saw him several times. He used to look out for me. If he didn't see me, he would ask the others where I was. They called him my follower. He used to wait for me outside public-houses, and restaurants, and at street-corners. He was always begging me to give up the life——"

"What kind of man?"

"He has been in the Navy. Now he's a hall-porter in one of the clubs."

"Yes?"

"One day he asked me to marry him. It didn't surprise me, because I knew he was fond of me; but I pretended to laugh at the thought —a decent man marrying a girl on the streets! He said that he would give me a comfortable home, that he wouldn't think about the past, and that he cared for me more than my life could make him not care. He was in earnest. He almost made me afraid. I was pleased to think he loved me, but it seemed impossible that I should ever be a decent woman."

"But now?"

"What do you mean?"

"If he should ask you now?"

"I haven't seen him for a long time."

"He must be a good man."

"Yes."

"It would be a great thing to deserve the

love of such a man. There's an ambition for you! Win his love again. Become his wife. Make a home for him. Look forward to the day when perhaps you will be the mother of his children."

"I feel more unworthy now than I did in the old days."

"He will not think so."

This discovery was a great consolation to the Sisterhood. It promised security for the child, who was so sweet and so feeble, so pretty and so weak, so innocent and gentle in appearance, but with so dangerous a poison in her veins. It was decided that Sister Mildred should see the man, tell him the story of Eva as she knew it, warn him of the danger that they feared, and ask him if he would take the risk. The girl told his name and the club at which he served. Sister Mildred wrote to him, and the next day he came to see her.

He was a man who carried in his face the recommendation of a noble mind. He advertised the benefits of Discipline. There was something heroic and dignified in his manner, in the carriage of his head, in the tone of his voice, in the honesty of his words. It was easy to tell him the whole story, not so easy to wish that he should take so great a risk.

He said in straightforward words that he loved this girl. "Her life never seemed to make any

difference to my love for her," he explained. "I don't know how I have done it, but I have loved her apart from what she was doing. When I was with her I forgot all about it; but when I left her I remembered, and it hurt me. I couldn't bear to think of her walking the street. God knows how that worried me. It seemed to get between me and the sun. Many a time I thought I couldn't stand it any longer. It was worse than a blow in the face; it was like a knife in the heart."

Sister Mildred spoke of the change in Eva's disposition, her genuine awakening to religion, her cleansed heart and purified mind. Then she asked, "Are you still willing to marry her?"

"You needn't ask me that," said the lover.

The next step was more difficult. The man had to be warned of the danger. Eva would love him to the end of her days, she would be a true wife and a virtuous woman, but there was a risk of another temptation. Nothing was hidden, nothing minimised. The whole dreadful hazard was made plain. One day the man might return to his home to find his wife senseless and odious with drink. He might forgive, might plead, might make a new start, might live for months in the belief that restoration had come; and then, once more the terrible disillusion, the hateful wreck of hope, the disgust of despair.

He listened attentively. When the Sister had made an end, he sat for a few moments in silence, reflecting.

At last he said, "There's one thing I can see. We must go clean away. London can never be any good to her."

"Are you willing to take her away?"

"Yes."

"That would mean giving up your work?"

"I'm not afraid. Out in Canada, out in Australia—there's always room for a decent man. We could make a fresh start. No one would know about her. She'd see nothing to remind her of the past, it would be a new world for her."

"You must think it over very seriously before you act."

"I've done that. I'll tell you what I'll do, Sister. It's plain sailing now; I can see ahead. Look here, I'll take this girl to church and I'll marry her, with you at her side. In my pocket there will be my passage to Australia, and at the church door I'll say good-bye to her. I'll leave her in your hands, as my wife; and I'll go straight off to the South. When I've got work, when I've made a home, and all's comfortable and easy for her, I'll write and send the money for her journey, and she shall come out to me. That's how I see the matter; that's my way of settling the difficulty. Will you agree?"

It was settled in this way.

The marriage was surely one of the noblest ever sanctified in a London church. The man had given up the certainty of daily bread; he was going to a country where he had neither friend nor acquaintance; he was doing this to save a woman whom, a few months before, he might have bought for a sovereign; and, having married her, having given her the security and protection of his good name, he was leaving her at the door of the church, to face the world alone, to make his way single-handed, to prepare a home for her.

That parting at the church door between the emigrant lover and the penitent Magdalen is ineffaceably impressed upon Sister Mildred's memory. She describes the man, with a ring in her voice, as "splendid," and her eyes kindle as she speaks of the chivalrous tenderness of his farewell to the young wife, and the quiet confidence with which he walked away alone, on his far journey to a distant country.

This devotion of the man, so unthinkable to many, so easy to explain by those conscious of superior sensibility, made a resistless appeal to the soul of the girl. She was humbled, and yet exalted. She felt herself unworthy, and yet felt herself spurred to merit so great a blessing. In a word, the nobility of the man brought her

out of the suburbs of the commonplace and set her feet in the city of the soul. She was in that region where the spirit loses the sense of the trivial and is conscious of grandeur. To be conscious of grandeur is to be conscious of God. She breathed the sublime air, saw the brightness of eternity, felt in her soul "the sacred passion of the second life." No longer for her was existence a vulgar scramble after transitory pleasure.

To be worthy of the man who loved her it was necessary that she should become her highest. To become her highest it was necessary for her to be spiritual. To be spiritual it was necessary to pray.

Into her heart, which had suffered so greatly and which had sought so disastrously to gratify the lusts of the flesh, there stole gradually and sweetly the cleansing tide of celestial love. Afraid to trust herself, conscious that she herself must always be uunworthy, she clung to the idea of a Saviour, bowed herself at the feet of infinite compassion, surrendered herself into the care of everlasting strength. She made her life a prayer, lived with the thought of Christ in her heart, did everything in her day's work as a sacrament of the spirit. And while this growth in grace developed and transformed her character, the health of her body responded to healthy toil, to regular habits, to

simple living and to noble thoughts. The will which had been so pliant, became strengthened. The lassitude which had so often assailed her, passed away. She was quick, energetic, bright-minded, and happy-hearted.

The temptation to drink came to her, but without its old force. She was able to combat the thought; and her suffering, while the passion lasted, was not very great. She was restless, fretted, distracted; but not torn. She came out from these strange psychical storms with serenity and quiet faith.

Not many weeks after his arrival in Australia the husband wrote and asked her to join him. He had found work, he had got a home for her, he could promise her a cheerful existence and the friendship of kind people. He sent an ample remittance for her expenses.

She went to see the mother, whose letter had first touched her heart to seek repentance, and after a brief visit and affectionate farewells, left England to join her husband. Some years have passed since her departure, and the only letters that the Mission receives from husband and wife tell of increasing prosperity and an ever-deepening happiness of heart and soul. This girl, who once walked the London streets, who was a dipsomaniac, and the beaten slave of a bully, is now the virtuous wife of a good man, the happy mother of healthy children, and a soul

consecrated to the service of humanity. Is there any other power on the earth which could have done this mighty thing, except that power which works by the need of the fallen soul for a pure Christ?

## TALE OF A TREATY PORT

WHILE I was making myself acquainted with the work of the West London Mission I came across a man so much out of the common and with so original a view of the religious life, that I turned aside from my researches to cultivate his sympathy and learn his story.

His attitude towards the Mission was one of relentless criticism. He worked with it because it appeared to him about the best religious organisation of its kind, but he refused to admit for a moment that it represented the idea of Christ. This amazing judgment was based upon his conception of charity. The injunction "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away," meant for my acquaintance almost the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. He held that no one who refused a beggar's plea for assistance, or who spent a shilling on luxury while his neighbour was in need, could by any stretch of the imagination be called a follower of Christ. As the West London Mission makes it a principle of its action not to encourage the loafer, and

concentrates all its energy upon declaring only the spiritual gospel of Christ—keeping that evangelical side of religion entirely free from the possible corruption of almsgiving—my acquaintance was not only in constant antagonism with the society, but he was continually getting into difficulties with the authorities. Here is an instance in point:—

"I was listening one night," he told me, "to an open-air service of the Mission, when a workman came up to me and asked if I would give him a shilling. He appeared to be in want, and it was not for me to judge him. I gave him the money. On another occasion, as I was walking away from the service, he followed me and begged for more assistance. He told a pitiful story, probably false, and said that if he could get his tools out of pawn he might really hope for a decent job in the following week. I gave him some money, and advised him to go and see one of the Sisters of the Mission at headquarters. It appears that he went there; and that after he had left the building, one of the Sisters, whose bag had been lying on the table in the room where he had been sitting alone, missed her purse. It contained something over a pound or two. Whether the man stole the purse or not, I don't know, I can't say; but when I arrived at the house I found that everybody had definitely decided upon his guilt. I

pointed out that the evidence against him was by no means conclusive, but, of course, without effect. 'I have told the police,' said the Sister whose purse was missing, 'and I hope the man will be caught.' 'What!' I said, 'you want to put him in prison?' 'He is a thief!' said the Sister. 'But are you not a Christian?' I asked. She could not see—this is what I complain about—that however guilty and abominable the man might be, it was an act clean contrary to religion, an act absolutely opposed to religion, to seek to punish him. But it is the same everywhere. You find a great deal of morality, a great deal of routine charity and mechanical religion, but the Spirit of Christ is almost totally unknown."

On the subject of conversion he had his own particular view. The narratives in Professor James's wonderful book moved him to no admiration. "The best model for a story of conversion," he said, "is to be found in Matthew, nine, nine—*He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him.*"

His mind, I found, was overcharged with a vast and immovable depression. He saw Christianity very vividly and very closely as something which a child might understand; and he saw those who represent Christianity making it something so difficult and equivocal that the world abandoned all effort to understand it. He

saw the idea of Christ as something which could quite easily change the whole face of existence, and he saw the Church entangling this pure and lovely thing with the confusions and distortions of a godless materialism. His ideal of a living brotherhood—each man really and truly regarding his neighbour with greater love than himself, each nation really and truly living for the total good of humanity, and all the world really and truly seeking sweetness, love, mercy, and simplicity, instead of ostentation, wealth, self-assertion, and self-aggrandisement—this ideal which he held to be the very elements and therefore the root essentials of Christianity, nowhere could he see visible on the earth. It was because he felt with all the force of his soul the religion of Christ to be a practical reality, the one means of exalting life and rendering humanity divine; and because he saw this one hope of men's salvation treated for the most part as a mere visionary's counsel of perfection, a theme for church pulpits, but not for practice in streets and homes and parliaments, that he had a stern judgment for religious organisations and felt himself to be solitary, powerless, and miserably ineffectual.

He was a man of real culture and some distinction. His life had been full of events. For many years he had travelled in the East as special correspondent for one of the chief news-

papers of London; he had a knowledge of the customs and morals of nations which was as intimate and well-ordered as his knowledge of their foreign policies; he had a sense of humour which was pleasant and refined, if not keen and incisive; in spite of an almost judicial gravity and a certain ponderous turgidity of mind which was sometimes within touch of aggravation, he gave one an impression of real power and solid worth. It was not long before one discovered that he had suffered very greatly, and perceived that he had experienced some unique manifestation of the religious spirit. The man was original, with a sense of mystery behind the quiet, almost stagnant self-possession of his manner.

"There is a modesty of the soul, as well as of the body," says Professor Granger,[1] "through which high-spirited persons usually shrink from talking about the principles of honour upon which they act. This is why the intrusion even of well-meaning persons in the things of the spirit is so often bitterly resented. The religious life, in its private aspect, is indeed a mystery and forbids speech, and when this reticence is transgressed the soul seems to be wounded. Dale, speaking of hypnotic experiments, says: 'I have come to the conclusion that when a man submits himself to experiment, he surrenders

[1] *The Soul of a Christian.* (Methuen.)

for the time the integrity of his self-command, allows a break to be made in the fences which protect his personality, runs grave risk of madness or worse. If I may put it so, there seems to me to be a sacrifice of the chastity of our inner personal life in these inquiries, which may have results on the higher nature analogous to those which follow the physical offence and still more ruinous.' "

In a certain sense, with real limitations, this is true. There is, indeed, a holy of holies in each man's soul which must be guarded against all human approach. To seek to enter there is a profanation. It belongs to God. But there is danger of a most pernicious egoism in the reticence which locks away from the benefit of other men a unique or miraculous spiritual experience. One has only to think what would have happened to the character and manhood of St. Paul if he had regarded his conversion as a thing sole and particular to himself, or of St. Augustine, or of St. Teresa, to realise that this natural modesty of the soul may become a menace to the highest expression of the spiritual life. It is necessary, sometimes, to bear the wounding pain and tearing sharpness of a spiritual disclosure; to forget one's self, to realise one's individual insignificance, and to give with both hands to the world what has been given in secret and with holy mystery to one's

self. But this can only be understood by the saints, and only by saints can the sacrifice be made without vanity and without creating disgust.

The man of whom I am writing has all the shrinking and timidity of soul which characterise a refined nature. It was therefore with the greatest unwillingness that he contemplated a disclosure of the strange event in his life which led ultimately to his conversion. When he perceived that such a narration might be of service to the cause of Christianity and helpful to those of his fellow-men struggling to discover reality in religion, he wavered in his refusal to discuss the matter, and after some further persuasion finally surrendered to the idea, but only upon conditions which will be faithfully observed in the following pages. I can give neither the name of the man, nor mention the scene of his illumination, and the story must suffer from a certain reserve as to details which honour obliges me to respect. Nevertheless, I think the reader will be interested and genuinely moved by the story, and, even as it stands, I venture to regard it as a real and valuable contribution to the literature of religious experience.

It was during his sojourn in the East that the miracle occurred. He had relinquished for the time being his service as special correspondent to an English newspaper, and had set

up a local journal of his own in a treaty port of evil reputation. Impending war had brought into this Mongolian town the offscourings of the nations, and troops from nearly all the countries of the world. Vice of the most hideous kind, which for long had struck deep its roots into this filthy soil, now flourished with the most open and unashamed effrontery. The troops of Christendom thickened the scum of Asian depravity. The place swarmed with iniquity. Life was worse than a bacchanal rout, infinitely more degraded than Rabelaisian gluttony; the air was vile with a corruption of men's souls, the devilries of hell smoked in the eye of heaven, you could almost smell the rot of decaying spirits. In this abominable and mephitic atmosphere, the man of whom I tell, an educated, healthy, and tolerant Englishman, lived a life that was fairly decent, fairly honourable, fairly pure. He had the work of his newspaper, which included some kind of superintendence of the printing-machines, to keep him employed for the greater part of the day; he was a volunteer and took his part in the drills; and he was profoundly interested, as a student of world politics, in the rush and turmoil of events which every hour were shaping more certainly and more hopelessly for a war the end of which no man could forecast. His leisure was spent in restaurants and cafés, he

mingled with the cosmopolitan mob, knew very well what was taking place around him, amused himself as the mood inclined him, did not descend to the abyss of perdition but took his pleasure, like a man of the world, without the smallest interruption from his conscience.

By keeping back certain important news, which might have had a disastrous effect upon events, he earned the gratitude and won the friendship of the General commanding the British troops. His paper began to be regarded with respect, and his position in the town gradually assumed the character of importance. But social eminence was no restraint on the lowest of passions in this particular treaty port, and he was perfectly free to pursue whatever course he chose without fear of scandal or financial loss. Therefore, while his position was steadily improving and his interest in his paper was increasing, he lived as he had lived hitherto, gave no thought to appearances, cared nothing for morals, and as for religion of any kind, he gave it no thought at all.

Imperceptibly there came into his mind a sense of uneasiness, a feeling of unrest, a gradual conviction of dissatisfaction. He cannot tell when this change began to manifest in his soul. It was there, potent and unexpungeable, when he came to contemplate a certain act which would have been unpardonable.

Before that act, in face of that terrible decision, the immemorial conflict of good and evil was a reality in his nature. No longer indifferent to conduct, he felt the tug of his higher nature and heard the judgment of conscience. He had become a moral being.

"I need not particularise my offences," he says; "there were very few things that could not be condoned or tolerated in our port, at least if one took care to be popular and good-tempered and on the right side of the more influential persons. But now, the course I contemplated was one that could not have been overlooked."

As he contemplated this act, weighing the consequences and fencing with his higher nature, there came to him the knowledge that whether this particular course was pursued or abandoned, the flesh of his character was spotted with sin and the blood of his spirit flowing with the contagion of iniquity. He saw and regarded himself as morally diseased. Contemplation of a single act had brought to his mind an illumination which lit up for him the darkest recesses of his soul and laid bare for his gaze the corruption of his whole nature. He felt himself to be hideous. Before the mirror of self-examination he stood and saw himself repugnant and vile. Not at this or that act did he sicken, not for this or that treacherous inclination did he feel

remorse; but for the pollution and rottenness of his whole soul he was filled with an almost insufferable abhorrence.

"I went," he says, "to the armoury where the rifles were kept of those who practised with them, and brought away my own rifle, No. 60, as permitted, for we were expected to take out our rifles occasionally and practise sighting, &c., without the use of ammunition. The order was that no ammunition was to be taken out without permission. But I took one ball cartridge, of the Mark IV. or Dum-dum kind, flat-nosed and warranted to act decisively. I lived in a little room at the top of a high building, as my wife and family were at home and I had given up my house in their absence; and I placed the rifle and the ball cartridge at one side of the room near the window, where I could see them, and took my meals at the table facing them, and sat opposite them day by day about a month, practising sometimes with my toe on the trigger but without the cartridge, and with the muzzle of the rifle in my mouth, until practice brought efficiency. There was nothing nervous or excitable about this procedure, and it would be wrong to suggest that suicide was in contemplation except as a remotely possible issue. It certainly was in mind as a possibility, but only under compulsion."

During this time he began to take stock of

himself. He became the doctor of his own soul, and studied that diseased and dying entity with the dispassion and curiosity of science. He felt the pulse of his moral nature and kept a chart of his soul's temperature.

"Of sins actually committed," he narrates, "I kept a register, not naming them but making a tick for each one on the wall with a pencil, and the date, so that I could see at what date these things were more numerous, and so getting gradually to reduce them. The building where I lived had a flat roof, and as it was now summer, with high temperatures reaching to 100° and over, I used to sleep on the roof, with no covering overhead, for the sake of the coolness and the light breezes. The pencil-marks were made on the lead sheeting of the roof: when, occasionally, rain came, it washed off all the marks, and a fresh lot began. No one, of course, knew of these matters, as I kept the door locked that led to the roof, and paid special rent for the roof, at my own wish, so that no one else among the other tenants of the building should claim access to it. My reputation in the town was as good as the average, above reproach as regards ordinary requirements; at the worst I believe I may have been credited with a leaning towards what may be called smart practice, not dishonesty, but a straining after one's own advantage, in busi-

ness. But of complete rottenness of heart I became convinced, the more so as no one else could possibly see it. If I could have conveniently died it would have been a great relief."

Presently he was aware of his own helplessness, and the need of a Power not himself. He says:—

"Although I did not believe in prayer, not supposing that an Almighty, if any, would alter the established order of the universe at the request of one benighted individual, nevertheless I was compelled to pray, and as it was useless to pray to a Supreme Being who could not be reached, or seen, or understood by a finite being, therefore I knelt down, sometimes on the roof, above the town and unseen by it, sometimes on the open plain, a few miles out of the town. I knelt down before a particular star, which at this time of the year rose in the west with special brilliancy. I prayed to that, well knowing that it was nothing but a star and could not be a god, or a sentient being of any sort; but feeling at any rate that it was something outside this world. The constellation of Orion also became very attractive because it indicated a continuity of design and purpose extending from past infinity of time to our own visible time and self, and surpassing anything on earth —indicating, in fact, the existence of laws or of

something to which the earth and all in it must give submission. So I spent the nights, sleeping under the stars, high above the town, and this gave me some peace; and in the evenings I watched the glory of the setting suns."

In this way the religious idea began to take form and shape in his mind, but vaguely, with indeterminate outline and an almost mocking elusiveness. He was haunted by the idea of religion, rather than conscious of religion itself. Nevertheless this haunting was sufficiently insistent to make him anxious about the possibility of its reality. He considered the idea; and while he was keeping the chart of his sins and praying to a star, unconsciously as the *eidolon* of that Power not ourselves which makes for righteousness, he decided to make himself better acquainted with the notions of the Christian religion. One Sunday he attended service at the Nonconformist church. He went late on purpose, "so that I should not be bothered with formularies and creeds and so on," and listened to a sermon which made little or no effect upon his soul, but which did not, at any rate, weary or disgust his mind with argument. He had, so to speak, strolled into religion, had gone to it inquisitively and with curiosity, attaching little importance to his action, and expecting nothing at all from the experiment. In this spirit he con-

tinued to attend the Sunday morning service for several weeks.

One day, during this period of his spiritual experience, a missionary who had a Chinese college in the town, came into his office with a little yellow leaflet which he wished to be printed. The leaflet contained texts from the Bible. Uninterested in Bible texts, the editor passed the leaflet to his printer without reading it, but, knowing "how particular and exacting religious people are about their requirements, expecting everything for nothing," he gave orders that the proof should be brought to him, in order to avoid misprints and consequent complaints.

In reading this proof, one of the texts arrested his attention. He cannot remember what it was, but he recalls distinctly the impression it gave him—the feeling of a new and sudden light on the conduct and purpose of Life. In this mood he continued his reading, and presently came upon words which, for some reason or another, caught him by the soul and held the beatings of his brain. These words were like an injunction particular to himself: "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." In vain did he try to shake off their impression, to persuade himself that he was getting superstitious, to rid himself of unnatural self-introspection, and to recover his old indifference. It was impossible.

The thought had fastened upon his consciousness. It clung to him like an embrace. He was obliged to stand still.

It seemed to him quite clear what he was to do. He was to abandon anxiety, to give up his chart, to discontinue self-examination, to relinquish all striving, wrestling, and effort. He was to do nothing. He was to be, not active, but passive. It was not for him to climb to God, but for God to descend to him. If there was something outside the atmosphere of this planet, it would be given, it could not be captured. The soul receives, it does not discover. Let him stand still, and await the will of God.

The mystery happened one night, or rather in the early morning, in the grey dawn before the sun had risen. He awoke from sleep on the roof of his house, and he remembers that the rope was flapping on the flagstaff in a gentle breeze and that a flight of small birds was passing over some tree-tops which were just visible in the world below. How shall I tell what he has told me?—how shall I give the history of that grey dawn before the sun had risen? He came out of sleep with the thought of Jesus Christ. He heard the rope moving on the flagstaff, saw the flight of birds pass like specks across the haze of leaden skies, and was aware that on the roof, somewhere on that square of dew-drenched metal under the grey dawn,

there stood and breathed the Son of Man. He knew this as one is aware of the presence of a person in a room one enters expecting it empty. He raised his head from the pillow to see if this Presence was visible, if he could behold what he felt, if the Thought had form and walked upon the roof before him. He knew that he would see nothing, but he looked. He was sure that the Presence was invisible, but he sought it. Nothing was there. Eye could see nothing, ear could hear nothing, hand could touch nothing. And yet, he was not alone. More real to him than roof, or sky, or trees was the sense of this invisible Presence. Its influence was closer to him than the air he breathed; and Its blessing, as real and unmistakable as the scent of violets, was a peace of soul passing all understanding. His mind was at rest.

The abiding and profound peace of this visitation assured him of its verity. There was no shock, no cataclysmic upheaval, no violent integration of personality. His reason was calm and lucid. He experienced no transport of joy, and was conscious of no uprush of ecstasy. But the change in him was utter and absolute. For the first time in his conscious manhood he was aware of an inward peace so exquisite and pervasive that it could only be defined as a new birth. "I knew that a new life had begun," he

says; and with this knowledge everything that he had been in the past seemed to close itself up and sink out of sight.

He did not know what he was to do with this new life, but, certain of its reality, he took his rifle back to the armoury and shortly after retired from the volunteers, waiting for some impelling force from the invisible world towards a new career. And in the meantime he prayed.

His prayer on the roof, uttered with the calm and quiet of the stars surrounding him, was the seeking of a child's hand in the dark for its father's guidance. He prayed, "O God, lead me!" and in the evening he would walk away from the town, out to the solitude and mystery of the plain, and kneel there, no longer with his eyes set upon a star, and pray from his heart for guidance and a destiny. Before the dawn of his illumination he had prayed vaguely to some indefinite Power dimly felt to pervade and sustain the universe; but now he prayed with the serenity of sure knowledge to a Person—not to a Name in a prayer-book, not to a Word so common on the lips of the generations as to serve alike for curse and blessing—but to a Person actual and real, Whose presence he had felt, Whose power he had known, Whose love he had received into his soul. There was now no doubt, no miserable unrest, no fear of silence. He was sure that

his words were heard. He was sure that they reached the heart of a personal Saviour. He knew they would be answered.

Without anxiety he continued his daily occupations. He expected no miracle, but was quietly convinced that sooner or later, and quite naturally, he would find himself doing work and living a life in consonance with the new light in his soul, the new birth in his heart. It is worthy the consideration of students of the Christian religion that conversion seldom leaves a nature content with its own new light and the development within the soul of its own new birth, but leads almost invariably to a life of selfless devotion and a spirit of the very purest altruism. A soul saved from sin does not so much feel a constraint to pursue its own righteousness as an irresistible impulsion to save the souls of other people. Conversion does not lead to the monastery, but to the mission field.

The prayer of this man was answered and work was put into his hands. It came very simply and made no break in the continuity of his life. The pen which he had used to interest and beguile became in his hand a weapon for righteousness.

"It is the only work in my life," he says, "that I care to think about, and it was badly done, and might have been done much better;

but I knew it was for me to undertake it, and to lose no time. It lasted me about two years.

"The town was full of gambling-houses, brothels, opium dens, and places still worse that cannot be named. There was no end to the degradation. And it had never once occurred to me that I was in any way concerned with these things."

Without shock or violence of any kind, with no sensation of a sudden awakening, he perceived that it was the will of God with him to strike a blow against this tolerated and long-accepted infamy. Accordingly he paid visits to these various places, studied them with care, and then began to write about them in his paper. At once the town was up in arms against him. What! to expose and drag into the light of day things purposely curtained from respectability and shuttered from the gaze of decency: to force public opinion to look full in the face of something it would not invite into its house and ignored upon the streets: to make Government take public notice of something whose existence it did not recognise, and whose iniquities it only shared in its private capacity: what! to insist that polite and civilised society should consider itself in any way responsible for cosmopolitan profligacy, that the lady in her rose-scented rooms should be forced to breathe the foul odours of an Asian sewer, that innocent and

pure-minded girls should be made to see the nakedness and scarlet shame behind the curtains and shutters of inevitable vice—let him see the reason and justice of these objections, and cease at once from this new work of his, before the paper was ruined and he himself banned by society.

The converted soul, conscious of a destiny, found itself opposed by "the complaisant spirit of the man of the world, who from the depths of his mediocrity and ease presumes to promulgate the law of progress, and as dictator to fix its speed." Let me give the entire passage: "Who does not know this temper of the man of the world, that worst enemy of the world? His inexhaustible patience of abuses that only torment others; his apologetic word for beliefs that may perhaps not be so precisely true as one might wish, and institutions that are not altogether so useful as some might think possible; his cordiality towards progress and improvement in a general way, and his coldness or antipathy to each progressive proposal in particular; his pygmy hope that life will one day become somewhat better, punily shivering by the side of his gigantic conviction that it might well be infinitely worse" (John Morley's *Voltaire*).

In this treaty port there was a cosmopolitan society composed entirely of such spirits, and to hint that respectability was merely a mask

covering the hideous features of infamy was to put those spirits into arms against the innovator. The hostility he encountered was not only public and general, but private and personal. He received visits from high officials and communications from powerful dignitaries. He was told that representatives of foreign nations had lodged protests against the conduct of his journal. He was informed that his exposures were a menace to international peace. He was definitely threatened with the suppression of his newspaper.

But the man could not be turned from his purpose. He had no desire for the patronage of the great, for the rewards of the rich, for the gratitude of the powerful. One thing was clear before his eyes, and it grew clearer the more thoroughly and widely he carried his investigations—that the souls of men and women and children were perishing in a great and awful multitude all about him; and he held it was the will of God, in the scorn of consequence, that he should compel authority and power to declare whether they countenanced and protected the forces which were every day producing this holocaust of souls, and that he should hold up to the representatives of religion the true picture of the town, leaving them to decide whether they should keep silence or take arms.

One need not dwell upon the martyrdom of this man. He was shunned by society. Legal

proceedings were instituted against him. He was threatened with beggary. It is not necessary to dwell upon these things because he did not suffer from them; he was immune from the petty enmities of men. Quietly and steadfastly he pursued his way, happy in the knowledge that the work was given him to do, conscious that he was upheld by invisible power. And while he could see the effect of his work in the gradual diminution of evil-houses and the increasing flight of criminal pariahs, he could also observe, not without a smile, the advance of his paper in the matter of circulation. In spite of protests, and in spite of the most emphatic warnings of a boycott, the sales of the paper increased with amazing rapidity.

At the end of nearly two years he had his reward. The last of the evil-places was closed, the last of the devils had taken flight, and authority and power came forward to shake his hand and congratulate him upon the work he had done for decency and good order!

This man, single-handed and most bitterly opposed by local sovereignty, cleared a whole treaty port of inhuman iniquity. It is a work which does not so much stagger the imagination as set one thinking how great a work might be done for righteousness if every man with the opportunity and the power set himself to make war upon what is base and unworthy. One wonders

what might be done for London if all the churches and all the newspapers combined to do away with the scandal of the streets.

If one reflects how many hundreds of men, women, and children might have been morally corrupted and spiritually destroyed in that town, had this man continued his life of easy sin and tolerant good-nature, it is brought home to one how great is the sin of omission, indifference, and neglect.

Wherever destiny may take the man of whom I have written, there he will exercise a twofold influence for good: he will draw a trenchant sword against iniquity, and throw the empty scabbard for reproach at the feet of a complacent Church.

Is it not a matter for reflection that the mind of such a man is troubled and made sad, not by the sins of the whole world, but by the faithlessness of the little Flock?

# THE CLEANEST THING IN THE HOUSE

THERE are still a few streets, alleys, and courts in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane to remind the middle-aged Londoner of that famous quarter as it existed in the Eighties, before Kingsway was driven like a broad furrow through festering kennels and pestiferous warrens from the Strand to Holborn. But these remaining records and mouldering souvenirs of a dreadful place are now so open to the wide avenues of respectability, so approachable from the prosperous streets of civic decency, so exposed to the eye of the police, that only those who carry in their minds a very distinct and intimate impression of the past can really know the thick pack of all that huddled squalor, the dark secrecy of all those burrowing alleys, the density of all that teeming swarm of filthy and debased humanity which once crowded the neighbourhood with horror and made a fastness in the very centre of London for crime and moral abomination.

Nevertheless, even in the Seventies and Eighties, there were people living in this terrible

quarter of the town who were conscious of the higher life and who made a struggle to realise their souls. A man whom I know very well, and who now occupies the position of chief responsibility in one of the principal business houses of London, was born more than forty years ago in the sink of Drury Lane; he and his fatherless brothers and sisters, a large family, were brought up in the knowledge of God and with an aspiration towards moral beauty, by a mother who earned the daily bread of the little household as a washerwoman. Nothing that he learned afterwards concerning religion ever approached in its effect on his character the simple instruction and the wonderful example of this toiling mother of Drury Lane.

In a household far less noble than this, there was born some six-and-thirty years ago in one of the darkest, foulest, and most secret slums of Drury Lane, a girl whose spiritual experience is the subject of this narrative. The father was better than most of his neighbours; he was neither footpad, pickpocket, nor bully; he would take honest work when he could get it. The mother was a weak and feckless creature, but she had come into Drury Lane trailing clouds of glory from the rural respectability of Camberwell, and made out of her past a continual contrast with her present which was not without its moral effect on the children. The swarm of dirty-

faced, ragged, stockingless and shoeless brats knew at least that there was somewhere in the universe a Something better than Drury Lane; playing in those littered gutters they were conscious of superiority, and among themselves and their playmates the name of Camberwell assumed all the majesty and mystery, all the distance and sublimity which Belgravia has for Kensington, and Kensington for Kennington. They were aware of something better than they knew. And as their mother constantly emphasised the magnificence of her past by assuring them all that she went regularly to church in those days, that the clergyman and his wife used to come and call upon them, and that she had once won a prize in the Sunday School, these little hungry tatterdermalions of Drury Lane began to associate the idea of religion with their vague idea of something better than they knew, and so grew up with a respect for Christianity which was almost unknown among their criminal neighbours.

Bess, the eldest child, was thrown so constantly into the company of her mother that she may be said to have enjoyed opportunities for moral culture and social refinement of a quite unusual nature. The girl was her mother's handmaid. She minded babies, made beds, emptied slops, peeled potatoes, scrubbed floors, dusted shelves, cleaned windows, darned stockings, and mended

clothes; she was quick enough to do the family's marketing, clever enough to nurse her mother when the family was enlarging itself, and knowing enough to hunt London for the scraps and broken meats which are given away at night by fishmongers, butchers, confectioners, and restaurateurs. Constantly in the society of her mother, standing in a superior position to the remaining members of the family, and armed even with authority to smack faces, slap hands, and thump backs, this little girl grew into maidenhood with a sense of power and a consciousness of virtue which might have made her almost odiously Pharisaical but for a stake in the flesh which was ultimately destined to pierce her soul. As it was, she received from intimate conversations with her mother some notion of religion, some floating idea of spiritual responsibility, some shadowy conception of God and Atheists, Christ and Satan, Heaven and Hell. If any one ever said their prayers in that household it was Bess.

She worked so hard, and the water from the tap was so unsatisfying, that occasionally she was allowed reluctant mouthfuls of her father's beer and her mother's stout. In thus sacrificing themselves for their child, the parents were sowing in her blood seeds of a poison which fructified and bore a harvest terrible to her afterlife.

On the death of her father, and when there were other sisters old enough to take her place as maid-of-all-work to the family, Bess was sent out to make her own way in the world. She had for recommendation in the labour market, a strong body, good health, and the advantage of a broken youth. Against her was the overwhelming drawback of Drury Lane. In vain she went from place to place asking for employment, in vain she entered her name in the books of registry offices, in vain did she take counsel of her friends and acquaintances at the street-corner. There was no work to be had at factories, no private resident would take a girl from Drury Lane as domestic servant, no one could tell her of any opening as a scrubber of stone floors or as a hand in a laundry. It seemed that all her virtue and physical strength were useless to London. The family connection with Camberwell appeared to mean nothing to mankind. She might just as well have been a cripple and a criminal.

But one day her mother brought good news to her—brought it back in lurching haste and bosky excitement from the public-house at which she had been consoling her recent widowhood. The publican wanted a servant. He thought, from what the mother had told him, that Bess might do. In any case he was willing to have a look at her, and if she seemed likely he would speak to his wife, and if the wife thought she

would do for the place, they would at least give her a trial. She would have to do all the housework, which included scrubbing and dusting the bars, and help the lady with the cooking. She must be an early riser, not afraid of hard work, honest,—no mistake about that!—thorough, civil, respectful, and sober. Her wages would be ten pounds a year. It sounded too good to be true.

It was a day of pomp and glory for Bess when she set out to take up her residence in the "Red Dragon." She wore a new hat, a new dress, and balanced her regal dignity with a new portmanteau in one hand, and a new umbrella in the other. On her hands were gloves. You can imagine the raillery of the brothers, the envy of the sisters, the tears of the mother, and the pride of Bess, at the moment of parting. Her progress through the alley began in consternation and ended with encouraging insults. Barefoot and blasphemous little urchins offered to carry her bag for a pint; slatternly girls inquired from windows, doorways, and the mouths of tunnelling alleys where she had got her hat; but for the presence of two brothers slouching self-consciously and unwillingly on either side of her, she would have found her triumphal progress humiliated by horseplay and made comical by practical jokes.

So passed Bess out of the foul slum in which

she had been born, and entered the great world of nob, snob, and mob whose portals for her were minatory with a Red Dragon.

There is one thing above all others of which a girl fresh from the self-consequence of her own home and new to the atmosphere of third-rate domestic service swiftly becomes aware. This is the contempt in which she is held by all about her. It is one of the convictions of inferior minds that they can only exercise authority by means of tyranny, and that they can only safeguard the inviolability of their own importance by an open and constant display of disdain towards those who eat their salt. And in such a place as a tavern this contempt for the servant is spread over a wide area. It is not only the publican and his wife and their children who treat the drudge as dirt, but the barmaids and the potmen. She is exposed from morning till night to the hard words and disdainful looks of master and mistress, she is made to feel her position in fifty petty ways by the barmaids, and if the potmen choose to persecute her with sensual insolence, she must put up with it and expect it as the lowest of human creatures in the establishment.

It was a bitter experience for poor Bess when she entered upon service in the " Red Dragon." Fresh from the tearful embraces of her mother, and still conscious of the sensation she had caused

in her progress through the streets, she was violently thrown into a position of meanest servitude and found herself treated as something lower than a dog. Determined, however, to give what is called satisfaction, she swallowed the lumps which kept forming in her throat, and endeavoured to put away with her best dress, her new hat, and her new gloves the feeling of resentment and bitter disappointment which made a pool of tears of her young heart. For weeks and months she fought a great battle with the pride of her nature, and learned at last a submission of soul which seemed to protect her from all dangers. She was made to feel, and she came to believe it with shame and misery, that she was clumsy, slow, idle, and inefficient. She took all the hard words thrown at her head as her just punishment for awkward hands, aching legs, and a tired brain. She struggled to be quicker, that is to say, struggled to do the work of three people with the thoroughness just possible to two. She was always breathless, always hot, always tired. The idea of sitting down for a quarter of an hour never entered her head; found in such a posture she would have been treated as a criminal; her master did not pay people ten pounds a year to sit still and do nothing. So she never rested, never paused for a breath; but all day long, from morning till night, she was fetching and carrying, cooking and washing, scrubbing and polishing—

the slave of everybody and the scorn of the whole house.

Consider the life of this girl. Because she was poor, because she had nowhere else to go, because she was a woman—from the dawn of the day till late in the night she was made to toil infinitely longer hours than a galley-slave and was treated worse than a tinker's dog. She had no hour of rest in the middle day, no time of amusement in the evening, no privacy except the solitude of her attic under the slates. When she went up to her bed, aching in every limb, she felt guilty, felt conscious of shirking, because the barmaids were still busy, master and mistress were still in the parlour, and the potmen were still on duty. When she woke to the rattle of her merciless alarm-clock she sprang out of bed in a panic of alarm, afraid that her mistress, with hair in pins, would be climbing the stairs to catch her asleep. From the moment when she woke to the moment when she crawled guiltily to bed, this young girl was at the beck and call of everybody in the house, was everybody's slave, and had to get through work which would have tried the sinews and broken the heart of a navvy. And she was in the heyday of life, her Spring was passing in this fashion, never to return.

The trial of her temper was considerable, but the trial of her bodily strength was greater. She came to feel at times that it was impossible for

her to do the work. Early in the morning, roused out of natural sleep by the unnatural clock, she was increasingly visited by a feeling of despair, a sensation of impending collapse: she would cry to herself, groan to herself as she dressed, and descend the stairs with something like the desperation of mutiny in her labouring heart.

One morning it came to her that she would be able to do her work better, get more heart into her, if she had a little drink at the beginning of the day. It was not difficult to procure this stimulant, and she felt no shame in taking it. The sensation was pleasant; a delightful vigour and a cheerful warmth pervaded her body; she went about her work with a will.

But during the day the body seemed to droop and slacken; the need for stimulant was unmistakable; she kept her eyes open, seized an opportunity, and took what she wanted. Henceforth there entered into her life a new joy. It was not only the sensation of the alcohol which pleased her; there was the exercise of brain cunning in getting it. Of a sudden she woke up to find herself an intelligent creature. She could watch: she could plot: she could bide her time: she could steal! These people who treated her as a fool—she could cheat them! That satisfied her pride, that soothed her growing feeling of resentment.

Not many months before this girl had been

perfectly honest and perfectly sober. In the centre of depravity and crime she had been chaste and virtuous. What a miracle! And now, in a few months, she had a new nature; respectable employment had driven her to drink and made a thief of her. A little touch of Camberwell in the night of the "Red Dragon" might have saved her; kindness, humanity, religious love might almost have made her a noble woman.

She grew more daring in her pilferings, and more reckless in the satisfaction of her craving. The end was certain, but she had reached a point where she really did not care. One day a bitter word from her mistress made her answer back, sharply, insolently, and with defiance. Alcohol had made her bold. She was given a month's notice.

Now, a girl who has once been a servant in a public-house can never hope for any other employment. It is a curious thing that taverns—about which so much cheerful poetry has been written, which are the legitimate shops of a legitimate trade, which bring occasional dividends to widows, spinsters, and even clergymen among the investors in breweries, and which are only denounced by fanatical teetotallers for whom every sensible man has a prodigious contempt—it is a curious thing, I say, that taverns should have this evil reputation. I am told that no respectable lady would ever take into her service a

girl from a public-house. I am told that even in the fringes of society, among very poor middle-class people, who find it difficult to get any servants at all, the mention of a public-house shuts the door in the face of an applicant for employment. Not only this, in houses of ill-fame, where men and women are living continually in the shadow of the policeman, a girl from a public-house would stand no chance whatever of a place in the kitchen. For some reason or another, society seems to have made up its mind that the atmosphere of a tavern is prejudicial to the morals of a young woman. In any case, society will not take the risk of introducing into its basements and its attics a girl who has once scrubbed the floor of Bottle and Jug and dusted the china ornaments of a publican's mantelpiece. Once in a public-house, always in a public-house—this, I am told, is the invariable rule of domestic service.

Bess was unacquainted with this custom, and never gave the subject a thought, when she took service in the "Red Dragon"; she was soon brought to realise its existence and appreciate its force, when she tried to get service elsewhere. No one would have her. Registry offices told her that they did not deal with publicans. Her mother said that she would look about in the neighbourhood—which meant that she would inquire among the taverns of Drury Lane.

At last a second place was found for poor

Bess, and once again she began a hard life which speedily degenerated into a life of cheating and of secret drinking. The poison was now deep-rooted in the fibres of her moral being, and if her employer had been an angel she would still have cheated him, and still have drunk herself into oblivion. There was a certain laxity in the management of this house, and the publican and his wife—who were often fuddled themselves—seemed to expect a little tippling on the part of their servants. Therefore Bess kept this situation for over a year, and might have kept it for ever if she had not on one occasion taken so much alcohol that she lay senseless on the kitchen floor for many hours, and was found with cinders smouldering in her apron and skirt—"quite enough," as her mistress said, who took brandy to recover from the shock of the affair, "to set the house on fire."

After some months of idleness, in which all her savings vanished into the tills of the publican —their original source—this poor desperate and descending woman got a situation in a low beer-house and vanished for some considerable time from the ranks of the leisured classes. It was such a tavern as the cut-throats of Eugene Sue chose for their meeting-place. Hidden among the darkest and most crooked sewers of Drury Lane, it hooded itself from observation under a cloak of grime, and stooped down as low as

it could get in the mud and garbage of the gutters; it was a place never visited by respectable working-men; footpads, murderers, and bullies filled its dirty bars, and the vilest of low women made it their place of gossip and business; it was a veritable thieves' kitchen, a boozing ken for the worst ruffians in London, a place where you could buy a murder for a few shillings.

In one respect this situation was the easiest of the three. The landlord and his wife were not particular as to cleanliness. Bess had time on her hands. She could sit down and rest; it was even possible to snatch forty winks in the afternoon. A very little labour in the morning was sufficient to accomplish the greater part of her duties; for the rest of the day she had only to assist her mistress in front of a smoky fire with grimy saucepans and greasy frying-pans. And the mistress was kind. "Take a drink, girl; I'm sure you must need it," was a common speech with her. They would sit together in the kitchen boozing and talking, almost like sisters, while the landlord smoked his pipe, drank his beer, and listened to the jargon of his customers in the bar.

But while the landlord's wife could drink all day and seldom needed to be carried up to bed, Bess was often so drenched in alcohol that by three or four in the afternoon she was helpless and useless for the rest of the day. This dismay-

ing weakness of their servant gave such concern to master and mistress that at last they had to speak roughly to her, to threaten her with dismissal, and treat her with a brutal severity. But neither curses nor blows had any power to effect a change. One night, drunk and deep-sleeping, they left her where she lay on the kitchen floor—a pail of dirty water thrown over her having failed to wake her up. On the following morning the landlord came downstairs to find her in the bar. She was sitting in his chair, her feet outstretched, her head drooping, her eyes glazed and heavy—drunk and senseless. This was too much for the master. The girl was thrown out of the chair, thrown out of the bar, and thrown out of the house.

From that day forward her life was passed in the gutters of the city. She was so sunken that no one in the world would give her decent employment, even if she had sought it. But she was too far gone for ambition. Only to drink, only to sleep—this was the fulness of her life. She wandered from street to street, made acquaintance with women in like case with herself, learned how to cadge, discovered corners where she could sleep undisturbed by police, formed the usual friendships of the lodging-house, and sank beneath the scum of destitution to the ooze and slime of unthinkable depravity.

Poor Bess! To have seen her as she was then

—in her clammy rags, her broken boots, her battered hat; to look at the matted hair, the inflamed skin, the glittering eyes; to watch the slouch of her gait and to mark the indifference of her soul to censure or to ridicule—this was to feel anger against a low brute who could so vilely, in the sight of children and young girls, degrade the sacred honour of womanhood. But if one had known the impressions of life stored in her brain from childhood, one must have pitied her. She had never known nobility of character, she had never seen beauty, she had never felt the influence of holiness. From infancy she had been surrounded by poverty and deprivation; untaught to read, untaught to play, she had been a drudge in childhood, a maid-of-all-work in girlhood, and at the dawn of womanhood an overdriven slave to heartless taskmasters. This was her knowledge of life. If one pure word of love had been said to her in childhood, if one kind hand had been stretched to her in youth, if at the threshold of her womanhood one glimpse of loveliness had been shown to her soul, might she not have trodden another road and had another music in her heart? One shudders to think how vast a multitude of rich and leisured people surrounded the neglected childhood of this London girl.

Occasionally remorse visited her brain. The influence of Camberwell was drugged, but it still

existed. When she was more than usually beggared for a coin and forced to sleep night after night in a doorway without a sufficient supply of alcohol for indifference or oblivion, she would be conscious of that vague and shadowy Something better in life, which had been the only Hans Andersen, the only Arabian Night, nay, the only Christ of her childhood. And in these moments she would draw her rags close about her, fold her thin arms tightly together, rock herself backwards and forwards on the doorstep, and moan, and whimper, and shed bitter tears, conscious of immense loss.

One night as she wandered aimlessly and sorrowfully through the lamplit summer air, she came upon a group of men and women holding a religious service at a street-corner. She stopped and listened. A young man was preaching; at his side was a wooden contrivance suspending a hymn-sheet; just below him was another young man seated at a harmonium. The crowd was composed chiefly of ragged and wretched men; immediately in front of the preacher and the harmonium was a line of decent women, among them a fair-haired Sister in uniform.

Not curious, not in the least conscious of repentance, Bess stopped and listened. She was tired, and it was pleasant to rest. She was melancholy, and this thing was a distraction. Now and then she looked away from the crowd and let

her eyes rest on the opposite windows of a public-house. If she only had twopence!

After the sermon, of which she understood nothing, and to which she had hardly listened, the preacher gave out the words of a hymn. Some one began to handle the wooden contrivance at his side, and presently to turn the sheets. This interested Bess. Then the young man at the harmonium laid his hands upon the keys. A sense of pleasantness, of movement, of something happening, came to the poor Miserable on the kerb. She looked at the grim faces of the people about her, and half-smiled. It was like the warmth and cheerfulness of a public-house after the hostility of the streets. She told herself that she liked music.

As they were singing, she looked across the street and watched with greedy eyes the crowd of men and women in the bars of the tavern. Surely some one there, with this cheerful music in the air, would give her a drink. No one ought to be mean now. Oh, God, what would she not give for just one glass!

Suddenly she became aware of something more than the music. That music now ceased to strike her as cheerful; it became, as it were, the expression of her own longing and craving; she wondered what these people were longing after and craving for, with so much sadness and yearning. They told her, in the words of the hymn:

"Take all my sins away,
Take all my sins away!"

Something seemed to cry out in her heart. She forgot the tavern across the road, lost all craving for drink, and remained stunned and dazed, listening to this faint wailing of her own heart. It was as if some magician had suddenly swept everything in the scene away, and left this woman alone in the midst of a great darkness with the noise of her heart whimpering in her ears. Again and again the words repeated themselves:

"Take all my sins away,
Take all my sins away!"

A longing, deep and intense, rose out of the depths of her heart. It was a longing to be clean. She knew nothing of theology. The dogma of the Atonement had never been explained to her. She was not even acquainted with the story of Christ. But out of the need of her own dying soul there rose this clamorous longing for a Saviour. On the muddied kerb of the street, her blood poisoned with alcohol, her brain sodden with the fumes of this poison, her will paralysed, her moral sense all but destroyed, her appearance shouting to all mankind that she had long sunk to the irretrievable depths of degradation—this poor creature of doorways and arches, this child of the Lane, this harried servant of beer-houses,

this depraved and befouled drunkard, felt suddenly and passionately in her heart the longing for some Power greater than herself to save her soul from death.

The words of the hymn—"Take all my sins away!"—had opened a window for her, which looked on heaven. She was conscious of a large and ample Spirit in the universe able to cleanse the heart and restore the soul even of such as her. She was convinced of a Saviour, without knowing His Name, without understanding His place in theology. Into the arms of this Power she surrendered her will and her weakness, and lay there with one cry on her lips, one cry which expressed all her bitter experience of life, all her knowledge of religion, and all the longing of her soul—

"Take all my sins away,
Take all my sins away!"

A miracle happened. The low and long-habituated craving for alcohol was expelled and cast out of her by the lofty and hitherto inexperienced craving for holiness. A divine pity descended out of heaven and drew her then and there into the haven of miraculous immunity. She lost the least wish for drink. She felt an intense longing for purity. She was conscious of new birth.

Her phrase to the Sister was very simple and

very pathetic. Perhaps the loving tenderness of that young saint, and the brightness of her innocent glad face, made the poor penitent woman who had been so miraculously born again, suddenly conscious of the depths to which she had descended. With tears in her eyes, an agony on her lips, holding the Sister's hands tightly in her own, she cried, "Oh, I would love to rise again!"—and this phrase she repeated again and again.

It was told her that the way was clear ahead to resurrection. She had taken the first step. God had heard the cry of her soul. Henceforth by prayer and supplication she would steadily advance along the road, every step of which was an ascent, until she stood upon the heights.

They prayed with her, ministered to her needs, showed her love and sympathy, kept her in their care, and when she was strong enough carried her to the rescue-home where women are trained for service.

She never once looked back.

From the moment when she felt that sudden longing to be cleansed of sin, she advanced steadfastly towards purity of heart and nobility of soul. Religion, from the outset, was wonderfully real to her. A very little teaching—because it was the heart they were educating—sufficed to acquaint her with the knowledge of Christ. She experienced the deepest joy in receiving this

knowledge. Neither pitying herself for the deprivations of childhood, nor abusing herself for the sins of her womanhood, she contented every thought of her brain and every aspiration of her heart with the idea of Christ as the Saviour of sinners. With joy she did the work that was given to her, with pride she sought to satisfy those in authority over her, and every day you could see fresh beauty shining in her face till every mark and vestige of depravity was obliterated.

She is now in domestic service. Nothing has occurred to tempt her from virtue. The aspiration, "Oh, I would love to rise again!" has been realised. She is in every way a noble soul.

The Sister to whom she uttered that aspiration at the street-corner long ago went the other day to see her in the place of her employment. She was telling me about this visit, and as she spoke her face became bright with pleasure. "I wish you could have seen her," she said; "she is really splendid; it does one good to look at her; she is the cleanest thing in the house."

## SISTER AGATHA'S WAY

IT is a part of the genius of the West London Mission to allow a wide latitude of liberty to its workers. When a lady is found who desires to serve in the Mission as a Sister, as soon as the authorities are satisfied that she is in earnest, possesses tact, and is moved by a sympathy so sincere that it is unerring in its enthusiasm, she is put in charge of a district and left almost entirely free to administer its spiritual government. Thus it is that you may meet among these good Sisters very diverse temperaments and discover in their methods a delightful freedom from sameness and a quite engaging tone of individuality; and it is this diversity which more than anything else, I think, marks the true catholicity of the Christian religion, and brings home to the mind the miracle of the universal attraction of the Master.

Sister Agatha stands for the matronal character of Christianity. She is a towering and massive woman, with the deportment of a dowager, the pride and cheerfulness of a happy mother, and all that brisk sense of a managing and scrupulous intelligence which we associate with

the dame of a store-cupboard. She has a broad and benign countenance, "a thanksgiving for her former life and a love-letter to all mankind"; through gold-rimmed spectacles she beams good-nature on the world, and there is a ripple of light in her white hair which seems like the symbol of a halo; it must be a dull mind or a cold heart which is not sensible in her presence of serenity and blessing.

I spoke to her on one occasion of Sister Mildred's work in Piccadilly and Regent Street. At once a shadow fell upon the luminous face, the soft and pleasant skin became hard, and one saw a deep and poignant pain in her kind eyes. "That is work," she said, in her quiet voice, "which I could not do. I wish I could; but I know that I should fail. Sister Mildred goes with a bunch of flowers where I want to go with a sword!" As she finished her eyes shone, the splendid head was lifted, and there was almost a ring in the low voice. One felt the spirit of the crusades.

"Sometimes, when I am walking at night through the streets of this neighbourhood, in Euston Road, for instance, I see sights which fire my blood with indignation. I ought to feel pity and compassion; I know I am wrong; but the feeling of shame and horror is uppermost. All my sympathies go out to the young men who are so dreadfully exposed to temptation.

I long to stop them and remind them of their mothers, and speak to them of the ideals of a pure womanhood. All I can do, however, is to pray. As I pass them in the lamplight, I raise my helplessness to God: 'O God,' I pray, 'give these young men strength to withstand temptation.' Sister Mildred is able to do more than that; the answers to her prayer come through her own hands."

You will gather from this remark that Sister Agatha is something of a warrior for God; and the first story I have to tell about her will show how boldly and how nobly she can fight for righteousness. But it is necessary, if you would possess the secret of her nature, to know that a womanly tenderness and a matronly kindness are the foundation pillars of her personality. She is what I think may be called a true daughter of Victorian Evangelicalism—a righteous and most motherly good soul, believing all dogmas and doctrines that she has been taught in childhood, reading her Bible piously and receptively for a blessing, finding comfort in prayer-meetings, refraining from all things which have the appearance of ungodliness, execrating evil with the force of an entirely wholesome mind, loathing atheism and agnosticism with a shuddering abhorrence, and mothering those lost souls who truly turn to God with a most tender and beautiful affection.

## I.

### The Bookseller

The neighbourhood in which Sister Agatha lives is a very bad one—so bad that, although it is outside the bounds proper of West London, the Mission could not refrain from planting its flag there. An abject poverty and an odious ugliness affront the gaze at every turn. One sees nothing but dismal houses, broken-down shops, littered gutters, slatternly women, dirty children, and ruffianly-looking men. There is everywhere a stifling odour of foul clothing. I have seen nothing so repellent and nauseating even in the filthy reservations for Red Indians in Canada.

The premises occupied by Sister Agatha take the form of a coffee-tavern and club. They are fairly commodious, wonderfully clean, and have an air of struggling brightness. There are rooms for men, rooms for lads, and a large hall where prayer-meetings, magic-lantern lectures, and religious services are regularly held. At a harvest-festival (imagine a harvest-festival in this villainous London slum!) the hall is dazzling with gifts of flowers, vegetables, and fruit, and crowded with the wondering Miserables of the neighbourhood.

These premises stand in the principal market-street of the locality, where there are shops on either side of the road, and an unbroken line of costermongers' stalls in both gutters. The pavements and carriage-way are always inconveniently crowded, and at night the whole long street is a dense and seething mass of deplorable humanity.

One evening Sister Agatha became aware of an unusual gathering in this street. It was a grinning crowd of men listening to the witticisms of a cheap-jack, and the cheap-jack was selling books of which he insinuated a prurient vileness. The crusading temper of Sister Agatha was roused into action. She forced her way into the crowd and interrupted the blackguard. "Do not buy these shameful books," she cried, "until you have heard what I have to say. Listen! If in this market-place men were selling impure food for your bodies, I would feel it my duty to warn you, whatever the consequences might be. Here is a man who would poison *your souls!* Will you let him? Will you give him money for what will corrupt your minds and destroy your souls? I beg you not to do so." You can picture the scene; you will admire the courage.

Something of a hubbub ensued, and a policeman appearing at this moment, the seller of vile books was obliged to beat a retreat.

A few months later Sister Agatha found the

man one evening addressing a crowd immediately outside the Mission premises. In a loud voice he proclaimed: "I was put in prison for selling these books I am now offering to you. And while I was in prison they gave me three books to read in my cell—the Bible, a Prayer-Book, and a hymn-book. I studied those books carefully to see where they beat mine, and I freely own that for immorality and indecency they win hands down. But why aren't the people who give your children the Bible put in prison? Do you know what you can find in the Bible if you read it carefully?—I will tell you."

Then he gave a mocking and derisive account, sparing no details and employing an intentionally coarse vocabulary, of the plague-spots in human life recorded in the ancient Jewish books. You might have thought to hear him that the Bible contained no Sermon on the Mount, no Fifteenth Chapter of St. Luke, no Epistle to the Galatians, and that the Old Testament expressed no longing after the righteousness of an Eternal God; you might have thought that the whole Book was written in the spirit of the "Decameron" and with the baseness of gutter literature in France.

At this point Sister Agatha appeared, splendid and terrible. The man stopped and regarded her. Then he bowed and said, "Madam, if you will be so kind as not to interfere with my

business, I shall be obliged to you." There was a threat in the words, and yet a hidden fear. It was evident to the Sister that he had been drinking heavily. She looked him full in the face and said, "I will not interrupt you, on one condition—that you come and see me when your work is done."

While she stood there several men asked her, "Is it true, Sister, what he says about things in the Bible?"

"It is true and false," she answered, and the cheap-jack glowered at her with increasing rage. "False, because he doesn't finish by telling you how against the evil which the Old Testament records it places the *law* which condemns it. There are dreadful things in medical books, but they are not put there to corrupt the mind. Those books are written for the purpose of curing disease, removing pain, and making men well. It is the same with the Bible. The Bible is the Book of Life. Think what the Bible has done for the human race!—and then say if you can mention it in the same breath with these wicked books."

With that she walked away, after steadily meeting the frown of the cheap-jack, which was full of menace.

In half an hour's time he knocked at her door. There was something so "fiery" in his eyes, she tells me, that for a moment she was seized with

a sensation almost of fear. The man was big, brutal, truculent; he had been fortifying his courage and feeding his rage at a public-house; he looked capable of outrage.

Sister Agatha admitted him, but led the way to a room where her assistant was sitting. She motioned the man to be seated; he remained on his feet, the heavy head lowered like a bull that would charge. "I've come here," he said, angrily, "to tell you something you don't know. I've come to tell you that you're driving me to crime. A man must live! What right have you to interfere with me? Why should you prevent me from gaining a livelihood? It is hard enough work, without——"

She interrupted him. "Do you really think," she asked, "that I interfered in your business to prevent you from earning a living? You know better than that. I interfered to prevent you from poisoning the minds of poor people and corrupting their souls." She drew a step nearer to him, regarded him with kinder eyes, and lowered her voice to the gentle tone of a reproach that is an appeal. "Have you thought what it is you are doing?" she asked. "Have you seriously contemplated the awful mischief you are making? We are here, helping people who are very pitiful and destitute to be pure and holy, trying to make them good and happy, labouring day and night to save the souls of

wretched men and sorrowful women who have turned away from God and are living in sin and misery; and it is among these sad and miserable people that you come with those dreadful books, making a mock of religion, making their minds more impure and more dark, frustrating our work, which is so difficult, and obstructing the love of God!"

He grew calmer, and appeared troubled. He sat down, and apparently began to cast about in his mind for a reply. But the Sister continued her appeal.

With an irresistible sweetness and with all the loftiness of a pure mind and a noble purpose, she appealed to the man's higher nature and implored him to perceive the evil of his work. It was the mother reproaching the tempter of her children. She had sheltered from him the multitudinous children whom God had given her to mother, because she knew how hard it was for them to see the light, how difficult for them to feel the attraction of purity, how easy to fall. Could he not perceive their danger? Could he not realise her difficulty? Was it not clear to his eyes that such a life as he was leading was displeasing to God and full of terrible hazard to his own soul? It could not be right to corrupt the hearts of men and women. It could not be right to poison their souls. It could not be right to hinder the work of God.

Suddenly the man bowed his head and covered his face with his hands.

"You are right, Sister," he said, with broken speech and bitter sobbing; "and you are the first one to speak to me, and check me. God forgive me; I am in the gutter, and I can't get out."

She spoke to him very tenderly and encouragingly.

"I will tell you this," he said, getting control of himself. "Those books are rubbish. There's nothing in them. My insinuations are far worse than anything in the books themselves. You may burn them all; I'm sick of them; but help me to get an honest living."

Then he told her his story. He had once been in regular employment as a printer, earning good wages, and never worried for a shilling. "My downfall began with betting. Every man in the shop where I worked followed racing. I was the keenest of all. I lived for it. There was always a halfpenny newspaper in my pocket. I couldn't talk of anything else. It was a mania. That led to drinking. The swells have their clubs; working-men have their pubs. It was there we talked horses, got tips, heard the odds, and learned the results as they came up from the course. I was always in and out of public-houses, and in the evening spent the whole of my time there. Then drink got such a hold of me that I was good for nothing. I used to be drunk

in the morning; my hands were all of a shake; and my head was so fuzzy that I couldn't see straight. Job after job I lost, until at last no one would employ me. Then I took to cadging, and finally I got to this. It doesn't pay; it's hard work; and I loathe it. I've always wanted to get back, but now you've made me determined to do it. Only, how can I start? Who will take me? Is there any one in London who'll give me a second chance?"

"The first step for you," she said quietly, "is plain, and it can be taken now. If you are in earnest, you will have no hesitation in taking it. You must sign the pledge, and you must pray to God for strength to keep it."

"Yes," he said promptly; "I'll do that. I'll sign the pledge for a start, and then I'll go away, and I'll come back to you when I'm sober."

She had no great hopes of this broken man, and it was with astonishment that she saw him some days later standing at the door of the Mission hall, waiting for her. He was sober. The scowling fierceness had gone out of his manner. He had made an attempt at brightening up his shabby clothes.

In this interview he told her the full story of his life, which was a tragedy dark and sordid enough to depress the soul of an angel. Then he spoke of the change which had come over him. "Signing the pledge has done a lot for

me, but what you said has gone deeper into my life. I feel now that come what may I must make a fight for my soul. I want to be a good man. I want to be what I never was, but what I might have been long ago and without much trouble if I had only felt as I feel now."

He did not ask her this time to help him to find work. He seemed to have recovered his self-respect and something of the independence of manhood. He said that he was not afraid of the future, that he would take his chance as to that. It was about the beginnings of a new birth that he wanted to speak, of the self-knowledge she had brought to his soul.

Then he said to her, "I want you to give me a Bible. Will you do that? I want one, and I should like it to come from you."

She could not give him money, and the only Bible she possessed was one that she had kept at her side for many years, which was dear to her with the memory of a thousand consolations, and consecrated by the thankfulness of the pure spirit which it had so constantly illuminated. This little Pocket Bible, so old, so worn, so sacred, and so loved, was marked throughout its pages by her hand; it chronicled occasions when a certain passage had darted new meaning into her mind, or when a text or parable read aloud to some poor seeking soul had brought the light of heaven to earth. You can imagine how dear

to her was this companion of her service, this record of her ministration.

And yet some impulse moved her to give it up, to surrender it, to give it even to this rough, unlovely soul who but a few days ago had mocked it and blasphemed it, with his hands full of pernicious vileness.

He took the book, knowing nothing of her sacrifice, and said, "I'll read it and speak about it to others, not as I spoke in the street outside, but of its judgment on sin, and the promise of God's forgiveness."

With that he left her, and she watched him go, her Bible in his hand, with something like pain in her heart but with a prayer on her lips.

Never again did she speak to him; but she heard of him once, and on one occasion saw him. He was then standing in the gutters of a market street selling harmless things from a tray, and the neatness of his dress and the respectability of his appearance, gave her hope that he had kept his pledge. When she heard of him again, it was from some one who had seen him at a Sunday service of the West London Mission.

From that day she has seen or heard nothing of him. He disappeared in the great tide of London life, whether for good or for evil she does not know. Who can tell, she often thinks, what my Pocket Bible has done for him, and for

others? Somewhere in London it is some one's companion, and perhaps there are new markings on its pages.

## II

### Transfigured

I was sitting with Sister Agatha one day in her Mission hall when a man entered and greeted her so warmly and affectionately that I was moved to curiosity. He was a grey-headed workman, dressed in his best clothes, washed and brushed, with that precise look and conscious pride in discipline which marked the best soldiers of the old English Army whose last representatives are seen upright on the steps of clubs or nodding to sleep in the gardens of Chelsea Hospital.

This fine fellow, so typical of the best London workman, had suffered and fallen and risen again. His story, which I learned partly from him and partly from Sister Agatha, is a story which witnesses in a wonderful manner to the amazing power of conversion. It must be a great man of whom Sister Agatha can say, her eyes shining with love behind their spectacles, "He is the brightest proof of God's grace that I have ever seen."

After his retirement from the Army he earned

his living in London as a painter. He was a fairly sober and a very industrious man, married and with several children. He lived entirely without religion, and spent his leisure in a slouching ease, utterly uninterested in life and careless of anything beyond the street in which he lived.

The death of his wife gave him a decided impulse towards evil. The trouble of a large family, the emptiness of his life, the dulness of existence, drove him to drink. He was one of those men who cannot support the *ennui* of their own vacuity, who seek to escape from the boredom of their own unemployed intelligence, who find in drink oblivion and a certain mounting upwards into fields of higher consciousness.

He became so completely a drunkard that his children were brought to the edge of starvation. The scandal of their condition resulted in an application to Sister Agatha. They were taken away from him, and he was made to contribute to their expense. In this way the fierce drunkard and the benign Sister came into conjunction. He had to visit her in order to pay the weekly money for his children's support.

"I shall never forget my first sight of you, Mr. Taylor," says Sister Agatha, with a smile.

"I was shocking to look at," he agrees.

"If I may say so, Mr. Taylor——"

"Oh, you may say anything, Sister. God bless

you! Nothing that you say will be anything but truth."

"I want to say it, because the change is so wonderful." She turns to me. "The word I feel I must use is '*repulsive.*' I don't think I ever saw in my life an expression of the human face more repulsive than Mr. Taylor's in those terrible days. We all felt the same. There was in his face something that repulsed sympathy and made the heart shudder. We did not so much fear him, or dislike him, as feel this extraordinary repulsion—as if he were inhuman. Do you remember, Mr. Taylor," she inquires, with a clearing face, "how we used to try and avoid you?"

"Ah, Sister, I remember it well. And I know that what you say is true. Sometimes when I caught sight of my own face I used to feel that I had better kill myself before I got worse than I was."

He came to such misery that he did at last contemplate suicide. He was torn between two disgusts. On the one hand was his increasing craving for drink, which his wages were not enough to satisfy; and on the other his increasing consciousness of degradation, which his will was not strong enough to overcome. In abject misery he got hold of a razor, and went back to his foul lodging to make an end of himself.

He had opened the blade and the sweat was bursting from his forehead, when something

stopped him. He does not know what it was. Something definitely interposed between him and his purpose. He felt himself opposed and interrupted. But of what nature this interference was, or from whence it proceeded, he could not say.

It came to him as he sat on the edge of his bed, the razor still in his hand, that his soul was in a terrible peril. He felt that he must save himself from some colossal terror.

The idea of rescuing himself associated itself in his mind with religion, and when he thought of religion he thought of Sister Agatha.

Now, although his heart was on fire for salvation, he yet could not prevent himself from showing a surly and scowling face to the Sister. He complained of his life, masked his real feelings, inquired about religion as though he were conferring a favour and stooping his intelligence to something trivial. "He was complaining and unattractive," says Sister Agatha regretfully.

He attended the services, came to see Sister Agatha, haunted the Mission premises. It is pathetic to think of this man with the repulsive face and surly manner hanging about that place with a heart hungering and thirsting for a new life, and yet with so repellent a manner and so unattractive an appearance that he inspired no love and awoke no pity.

Sister Agatha would speak to him, would tell

him all she knew of religion—so far as he would let her—and on many occasions she sought to break down the rough and brutal barrier which he seemed to oppose between his soul and hers; but it was heartbreaking work; she was busy and the man became a bore.

One day she was just going out on her rounds when her assistant came and said to her, "Mr. Taylor is here; he wants to see you."

"Oh, bother Mr. Taylor!" she exclaimed.

She went to the door of her room, which was on the first floor, and was just going to tell her assistant to get rid of the man, when he sprang half-way up the stairs, his face shining and transfigured. "Sister, I won't detain you," he said, in a new voice; "I only wanted to tell you what has happened. The light has come. Last night I gave my heart to God—to-day my tools have been wet with my tears—but they are joy tears now, for I know that all the past is forgiven."

The change was so remarkable that Sister Agatha could scarcely believe her eyes. She heard what the man said, but her mind was dazed by the look in his face. It was not the same man. The very features were changed.

"I shall never forget that moment, and neither will you, Mr. Taylor!" she exclaims, with loving remembrance. "We prayed together, and we were very happy, were we not? It was a true case of 'Once I was blind, now I see.' The light

came suddenly, in a moment, and all was changed." She turns to me. "His face was transfigured. It was *shining*."

He told me that in the loneliness of his own room he had been thinking of his sinful and wretched life, and feeling how impossible it was for him ever to be a different man, when all of a sudden, just like a voice in his soul, he heard the announcement that Christ alone can take away the sins of a man. In a flash he saw that he had nothing to do but surrender: that he was not to strive, but to be grateful: that God was only asking him to believe, not to struggle, not to build up the ruins of his life.

"I simply gave myself to God," he said quietly. "I don't know how else to put it. I surrendered, laid down my arms, and felt all through my soul that I was pardoned and restored."

That is nine years ago. For nine years this man has not only been immune from drink, has not only made a comfortable home for his children, has not only been a first-rate workman and a good citizen, but throughout those nine years he has been, in Sister Agatha's phrase, "a worker for Christ, beloved by all, and a hiding-place for many."

If you could see the brightness of his face and feel the overflowing happiness of his heart, you would better realise the miracle of conversion. The man is a living joy.

## III

### The Little Lion

However profound the change produced by conversion, however complete and miraculous the revolution of new birth, the individual note of the disposition preserves its tone. A man may alter every one of his habits and may become literally transfigured in appearance, but there will remain with him that total impression of personality, that deep and inward undercurrent of character, by which his friends have always known him.

One of Sister Agatha's devoted disciples was a droll and waggish little Cockney before his conversion, and he remains a droll and waggish little Cockney years after the great hour of new birth and the exalting experience of illumination. The man is entirely different in every other respect. You might say of him that the old heart has been removed from his body and a new heart put in its place. You might say that his character has been not so much improved, or revolutionised, as substituted by another. And yet the men who knew him in the old days could not fail to know him now. The quizzical look is still in his eyes, the ripple of laughter still in his voice, and he cannot help himself from regarding life

even in his new condition with the same spirit of amusement as diverted him in days of darkness and debauchery.

The foreground of existence remains the same; the change wrought by conversion is in that "curious sense of the whole residual cosmos as an everlasting presence, intimate or alien, terrible or amusing, lovable or odious, which in some degree every one possesses" (William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*).

Born in wretched circumstances, stunted in growth, and with only the animal intelligence of his brain quickened into activity, this man of whom I write, growing up with all the colour of his surrounding squalor in his soul and with all the fierce cries of a brutal neighbourhood ringing a kind of martial music in his brain, reached a manhood that was belligerent, quarrelsome, and cruel. Although he was so brief in stature as to be little more than a dwarf, he was yet so perfect in his parvitude, so herculean in his scale, so fearless and pugnacious in his disposition, that he was like an Iliad in duodecimo or an eagle of the bantam yard. "I was like a little lion," he said to me.

Sharp as a pin, quick as a trigger, and singing like a kettle with his overcharge of physical energy, this little lion of the London gutters went about seeking whom he might devour. No day was satisfactory to his mind which had not

been marked by a battle. His sense of touch craved for the feel of yielding flesh and collapsing cartilage, his sense of colour demanded a scarlet-spilling nose, his sense of hearing could not be satisfied with anything but the thud of knuckles and the heave of exhausted breath. He loved fighting as another man loves music or postage stamps. He gloried in his squatness because of its temptation. He sought battle under the mask of his epitome, and never took off his coat and disclosed his sinews till it was too late for the other man to draw back. The sweetest of all adventures was to encounter a man bigger than himself but not so powerful or quick, and the sweetest of all human words was the familiar cry of a London crowd, "Go it, little 'un!"

He haunted public-houses because it is in drink that blows come quickest. Alcohol, which is said to make glad the heart of man, also has the property of making blue his nose and, indirectly, black his eye. He is a poor creature who cannot in the bar of a four-ale public-house make a pot the bridge to a fight.

As years advanced the reputation of this little lion became so firmly established that the population of his neighbourhood began to regard him as a general nuisance. Peace-loving men, who went to the tavern for a quiet pipe, a friendly pot, and the satisfaction of open-hearted conversation, resented the perpetual bellowing

of the little lion and objected to the everlasting lashing of his tail. Instead of forming a cheerful ring round him, and calling out "Go it, little 'un!" these false friends began to turn their backs upon him when he strutted into their midst, and to talk over his head to their neighbours when he addressed a remark to them. Touched to the heart by this disaffection, the little lion took to drink, and over his drink made mock of the general company. He was a painter, like the man in the last story, and could earn good wages. He was never without money for drink. At last he became a drunkard. One day when he was painting a lamp-post on Waterloo Bridge, being stupidly drunk at the time, he fell from the ladder and came with a shattering concussion on the pavement. For some weeks he was in hospital, and when he returned to civil life it was with all the lion taken out of him.

He drank now, not for comfort, but for delusion. Drink was the magic that transformed him from a broken-down, trembling, red-nosed little painter into the majestic Lilliputian of his leonine period. When he was drunk he felt himself capable of fighting the whole human race.

"Was it a craving with you?" I inquired.

He pondered the word, turned it over uncertainly and rather disgustfully on his tongue, and

with down-pressed cogitating lips, shook his head. "No," he said thoughtfully, "I shouldn't have said it was a crave." His face brightened. "I didn't feel I should die without it, *but I had to be where it was.*" That explained his condition.

In all his misery he had a little son, the express image of himself, who watched over him with the tenderness of a woman. It was this midge of humanity who came to fetch him from the public-house, who guided him through the streets, who steered him clear of policemen, and helped him up the stairs of his tenement. "Lean on me, dad," he would speak; "I'm terrible strong, I am."

Sometimes father and son would speak together. "I wish I could give up the drink, sonny." "Why don't you try?" "I have." "And you can't?" "It don't look like it, do it?" "*I* would, if I was you." "So would I if I was somebody else." "Look what a lot more money you'd have." "I've thought of that." "We could enjoy ourselves, couldn't we?" "I'll have another shot." "Bert's father signed the pledge; he says it did the trick for him." "I could not knock his face in!"

It was through his affection for the son who watched over him that the little lion at last set himself to overcome his failing. He did not sign the pledge, whether out of contempt for Bert's father or not is unrecorded, but he struck

a step higher, and went straight to religion. Sister Agatha's open-air services in the market-street had often caught his attention; he knew that religion dealt with the soul; he had a feeling that what he wanted was not a pledge-card nor a blue-ribbon in his coat, but an entirely new rig-out in the spiritual line, and religion was the shop for that.

"So I went to these 'ere services," he says, "and I thought the singing might have been a little more lively, and the praying a little more something that I could understand; but Sister Agatha took my fancy from the very first. There's a lady! I thought; a real lady. Not a fashion-plate, but an angel—one of the big married ones! Lor, what a little chap I felt looking up into her big sweet face!"

He came regularly to these services and at last began to frequent the Mission hall. But drink was a habit. He had to be where it was. And sometimes he was drunk.

Nevertheless he still clung to his first idea that religion was the way of escape, and only dimly comprehending the idea of God, and only vaguely feeling the idea of Christ, he prayed often—prayed as he walked along the street, prayed and sweated as he passed a public-house, prayed as he worked, and prayed in his home. Into the universe he breathed the cry from his poor little Cockney heart that a strength which

he had never known and could not understand, might be given to his will, that what he had been might be forgiven, that what he desired to become, so earnestly and yet so stumblingly, might by the grace of God be accomplished.

When he fell, so full was his heart with shame that he could not bring himself to enter the Mission hall. "This was a new feeling for me," he said; "and it made me think. I had never found my master before." He began to see that he was in for the greatest fight of his life.

One day his wife came to Sister Agatha with grief and despair in her poor eyes. The little lion had got drunk, had made war upon the police, had been taken before the magistrate, had been sentenced to fourteen days' imprisonment.

Prison made him hate himself, and made him determined to throw up the sponge. He would make no more pretence of being good; he would live like the rest; he would drink when he wanted to, fight when he felt inclined, and used the Name of God only to round off an oath.

As he stepped through the prison gateway he saw two women waiting for him. One was his wife, the other was Sister Agatha.

"You've done me," he said. "If you hadn't met me here, I'd never have looked at the hall again. I couldn't have. But now—— Well, Sister, it's all up. You've done me."

It was this loving action of the Sister—her tenderness and loving-kindness in his disgrace, her unswerving faith in his rectitude when he had fallen; her exquisite sympathy and encouragement when his heart was overfull with bitterness and resentment, that brought illumination to the soul of the little lion. It made him feel the reality of Christ. He saw the character and nature of religion. He was conscious of love.

From that day he never fell. His victory over drink was complete; his progress in the knowledge of Christian revelation was sure and unbroken.

"He used to come to my Bible Class," said Sister Agatha, "and we would choose a text, and all the men present would speak about it in turn; do you remember, Mr. Burton?"

"Well," he answered, with a smile at me, "I can remember that the speaking began with Sister Agatha, but I don't seem to remember that it ever came round to me!"

"That is his way!" says Sister Agatha, bubbling with soft laughter.

While he was attending the Bible Class, Sister Agatha was taken ill. She left the district for the time being, and went to the headquarters of the Mission. One day he came to see her. "I came yesterday," he said, "but the big white step frightened me. I could manage the little one at the hall right enough,

I could step over him; but this was too much for me the first time I saw it. I had to give it up." Later he came with a basket of new-laid eggs; they were marked with his wife's love and bore the date of their laying. He said that his home was happy, that life seemed quite different to him; there was brightness in his face, and a new quietness in his voice. The man was full of serenity.

One day he came to see her when she was out visiting. He followed to the buildings where she was engaged and waited for her. They walked away together. Near St. Pancras Station they stopped to say good-bye. There was a solemn, Sister Agatha says a kingly, expression in his eyes, as he said, "I want to say one thing before I go home. I want to ask you to remember, among all the disappointments of your work, that there is one man who by the grace of God will never go back to his old life."

That is nine years ago. Never once has he gone back to drink; never once has he had a fight; always he has been a devout and humble Christian. He has moved to one of the outer suburbs of London, where his children feel themselves in heaven, and where he can grow flowers and keep chickens and rabbits in his garden. "It's very nice down there," he told me. "Some of my mates say to me, 'What, Bill! don't your

old woman never give you no beer money?' 'Oh, yes,' I answer, 'shillings and shillings.' Then I say to them, 'Here, where's your last week's beer money? Where's it gone? What have you got to show for it?' They don't like that! I tell 'em, particularly on a bright sunny morning, when a chap can't help wishing he was in the country, 'I was looking at my beer money this morning,' I says; 'lor, it has grown! some of it has got roses on it, and dahlias, and chrysanthemums, and Michaelmas daisies; some of it has got feathers on it and wakes me crowing; some of it hops about with fur on it; you never saw such beer money in your life—smells of roses, cackles with egg-laying, and tastes of rabbit! By the way, how is *your* beer money looking this nice autumn morning?' I always speak like that to them when it's public; it's not a bit of use talking serious to a lot of fellows who don't care for anything but the booze; of course, I speak differently to a chap who asks me on the quiet what I think of religion. I tell him straight what I think, and advise him to get right with God. Of course, I have to stand a bit of chaff. Some of my mates will make a ring round me and say, 'Here, Bill, you're a Christian man; tell us all about it?' 'What would be the use?' I answer; 'it isn't eternal life you want, it's beer.' Once or twice they've put up a chap to make me look small—one of the talkers, who read atheist

books. 'How do you explain this, and what do you make of that?' he asks. 'I don't know; I'm not clever enough,' I answer. 'You believe in something you don't understand!' they all laugh. 'Yes, mates,' I say, 'that's perfectly true; I do not understand it. But I'll tell you what I do know. I know what religion has done for me. Hold on a minute. My children have got boots on their feet; have yours? My missus is glad to see me come home, my garden has got flowers in it, on a Bank Holiday we go to the seaside, when a friend is up a tree we can help him, when I'm out of work we've got bread; can you say the same? I know what I was; I know what I am; and I know how the change was made. That's enough for me.' I don't say I convert any of them; I'm not good enough for that; but I've made a few of them think about the drink. Take it from me, all the misery of the working-classes comes through drink; first and last, it's the public-house that causes all the mischief. Get rid of drink and you'd have a new nation—a happy nation, a strong nation, and a religious nation. But I'm talking. Sister Agatha, your turn now!"

On the anniversary of this man's conversion, a letter comes every year from the outer suburb to the slum where Sister Agatha saved him and is still saving others, and a letter from Sister Agatha reaches him in his happy home on the

same morning. They give thanks to God for His great mercy.

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It would be a pleasant diversion and a really formative experience, if men and women of leisure would give an afternoon every week to visiting such people as Sister Agatha, Sister Mildred, Sister Marjorie, and Mrs. Price Hughes —people who are living the most romantic and useful lives of all the myriads in London—and to making themselves acquainted with the work of Christianity in action.

So much can be done by such a little expenditure of sympathy. Since the coming of Sister Agatha, the slum where she works has made an effort to cover its ugliness. She has taught people the joy of flowers, and you will see here and there window-boxes of geraniums, like the shrines of saints in Latin countries. Gifts of flowers are brought by these people to the harvest-festival. There is quite a movement towards beauty and homeliness.

Among the sad and sorrowful of this wretched quarter, the figure of Sister Agatha moves like an angel—"one of the big married ones"—and she stands in the lives of hundreds of people for law and order, for respectability and decency, for kindness and family love, for aspiration and religion. Like Sister Mildred, she is a reproach to the sinful. Compassionate enough to those

who confess their sinfulness and cry to God for His mercy and forgiveness—then she is like a mother clasping her son to her love, like a hen gathering its chickens under her wings—she is stern, implacable, and indignant with those whose lives are bad. She is not of that temperament which loses sight of the power of conscience in its contemplation of environment and its consideration of heredity. She believes that every man and woman knows good from evil. She holds that there is no excuse for sin. She declares that there is a conscience in every soul, and that to the voice of conscience every soul is answerable. Only in such a spirit can a good woman really accomplish a great work, whatever the strata of human society in which she stands for the religious life. Sentimentalism, unction, and the excusing spirit of emotional tolerance have worked and are still working immense harm. The line between good and evil is clear marked. The right and the wrong of life are visible to the dimmest eyes. The most degraded can recognise the difference between God and the Devil.

"Man," says Ernest Hello, "is led into error with appalling facility. He receives it through all the senses by means of which he communicates with the outer world. He absorbs it at every pore; heart, mind, and body, each and all are cruelly and frightfully corruptible." This

is true, but the road to evil is easier when it is paved with excuses, and the way is clear to all mankind unless goodness is there to obstruct the path. "The execration of evil," says the same author, "is the rarest of virtues and the most forgotten of glories."

Would it not be helpful to humanity and more harmonious with the spirit of Faith, if all the Churches broke down their little sectional fences and enclosures, and united in one great confident army of God to execrate evil, to denounce sin, and to affirm that only by the power of Christ can a soul attain to everlasting life? This day will come for the Churches of the Reformation, but not yet. In the meantime, I would beg the children of the Establishment who read this book, when they next hear such expressions as "the dissidence of dissent," and "the Nonconformist Conscience," to call to their minds the sword of Sister Agatha and the bunch of flowers of Sister Mildred.

# NOTES

## NOTE A. (Page 24.)

The school of thought which shrinks from the idea of happiness in religion and regards the idea of joy even in heaven with a shocked and mournful disapproval, has recently found a writer to express its opinions in the columns of a Church newspaper. He says: "Our Lord did not say, 'Blessed are the happy'; He said, 'Blessed are they that mourn.'" To which I reply: Our Lord did not say, "Blessed are the happy," because it would have been tautological to do so; and He did not say, "Blessed are they that mourn," because it would have been obviously untrue. He said, "Blessed are they that mourn: *for they shall be comforted.*" The blessing does not lie in the mourning, but in the immense change which takes place in the soul when comfort has changed the whole attitude and light has swept away the darkness.

"I suspect a religion," he goes on to say, "that makes a great deal of happiness. It seems to me rather pagan than Christian." Humanity, on the other hand, has come to suspect a religion that makes a great deal of unhappiness. Such a state of mind seems to the intelligence of the world neither pagan nor Christian, but morbid and unhealthy. "Let those who thus suffer," says St. Teresa, "understand that they are ill." And for my part I suspect the honesty of the affirmation. I do not believe that the writer of it would refuse a rich estate, or that he would voluntarily live in Houndsditch. I do not believe that any healthy and rational man ever refused a happiness that he could accept with honour to himself and

without hurt to other people. It seems to be the opinion of physicians that people who whip themselves and wear hair-shirts next to the skin do so because such practices make them happy; it is a case of one of those perversions, common and shocking to the human conscience, which are rather matters for the alienist than for discussion in society.

That sorrow is a noble discipline no one in his senses will deny. But it would be a man surely out of his senses who chastised his son in order to make him long for more chastisement, and who stimulated him to look forward to manhood as an opportunity for receiving and enduring even more chastisement than he could rightly expect to enjoy in his tender youth. All the miseries and afflictions of this life—most of which come from wrong-living or foolish laws—can only be regarded as helpful so far as they strengthen the soul to gird up its loins and seek the blessing of happiness. It would be a mad politician who set about the destruction of all beneficent legislation, on the dogma that the ideal of happiness is "rather pagan than Christian."

"What strange rage possesses some people," says Voltaire, "to insist on our all being miserable! They are like a quack who would fain have us believe we are ill, in order to sell us his pills. Keep thy drugs, my friend, and leave me my health."

"It is pathetic and ludicrous sometimes," says Professor Granger, "to find the results of unwholesome surroundings, want of cleanliness, and bad cooking, treated as part of the necessary discipline of life, and the victims of their own and other's incompetency treated as though, like Job, their misfortunes were a special token of the divine interest."

Finally, for my purpose, the writer says: "It is true the word 'happy' is used in some places in the English Bible, but is not that a mistake?" Well, I hope not!

Perhaps he will see how far his morbidity carries him, if he take his English Bible or his Greek Testament, and wherever he finds such words as stand in the common

acceptation of men as synonymous with happiness, substitute for them any terms he finds to his taste which stand in the common acceptation of men for the contrary to happiness. I think he will soon find himself over the ankles in blasphemy and up to the eyes in foolishness.

"Our business henceforth is not with death, but with life." "Joy is the great lifter of men, the great unfolder." "For life to be fruitful, life must be felt as a blessing."

It is just such a faith as that to which this writer clings which has poured Christianity out of France and is fast emptying it from Italy and even Spain. "Communion with such a God," said George Sand, "is impossible to me, I confess it. He is wiped out from my memory; there is no corner where I can find Him any more. Nor do I find such a God out of doors either; he is not in the fields and waters, he is not in the starry sky. . . . It is an addition to our stock of light, this detachment from the idolatrous conception of religion. It is no loss of the religious sense, as the persisters in idolatry maintain. It is quite the contrary, it is a restitution of allegiance to the true Divinity. It is a step made in the direction of this Divinity, it is an abjuration of the dogmas which did Him dishonour." George Sand was brought up in a convent, in the odour of abasement, and under the frown of displeasure.

It should not be necessary for me to explain that by "happiness" I mean everything that the soul of man can glimpse, with the utmost reach of its aspiration, on receiving into itself the meaning of such divine words as: "I am come that they might have Life, and that they might have it more abundantly." I cannot be supposed to mean the transitory happiness of a mere hedonism. I am conscious of a deeper happiness in the saddest music of Chopin than anything the sensualist can possibly derive from the jigs and catches of the music-hall. I am conscious of a profounder and more glorious happiness in health and exercise than anything the sot can gain from the wildest intoxication. By watching over and waiting upon beautiful flowers I enjoy a sense of happiness which

cannot be brought without violence into comparison with the pleasure a public woman gets from the glamour and racket of a fashionable supper-room. "Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought," is a true saying, if we lay as much emphasis on the sweetness as upon the sadness. A lugubrious hymn turns the stomach of healthy people. "Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament, Adversity of the New," is only true when we understand that Adversity is not a blessing unless it leads away from a transient and soul-killing prosperity to the eternal happiness and everlasting felicity of faith in God. The final Beatitude makes plain the mind of Christ. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, . . . rejoice and be exceeding glad." Melancholy people dwell on the means; it is surely wiser to get as quickly as possible to the goal.

When one reflects upon the instruction that it is necessary to become as little children before we can enter the Kingdom, it must be clear to us that we are yet outside the gates of love when our hearts are full of apprehensions, abasement, and self-distrust. Such a condition means egoism, and egoism of a very dangerous order: it is the contradiction of Christianity, which is selflessness. The happy Christian is not like the Pharisee in the parable, full of self-righteousness, and poised in self-assurance; he is secure because the Fatherhood of God is a reality to him, and happy because he has found everything he can desire, not in himself, but in Christ. In a fine phrase used, I think, by Bishop Gore, such a man does not so much tarry to exorcise the devil as hasten to exercise the angel.

Christianity is not arrayed against the world for being happy, but is in the world to declare and to give the only happiness which is lasting and divine.

## NOTE B. (Page 26.)

One of my correspondents, who has had an intimate knowledge of the East, writes as follows: "The real contrast between Christianity and other religions is seen in the fact that flagrant sins condemned in the one are practised as part of the religion itself in the others, as shown by Miss Amy Wilson Carmichael in *Things as they are in Southern India*. . . . Contact with things as they are dispels many illusions."

"Asian religions," he says, "make no effort to convert evil men to righteousness. Ceremony counts for more than character in *every* false religion. . . .For a Hindu to eat with one of another caste, or of no caste, is a greater sin than murder or adultery. Is it not also a 'mortal sin' for a Roman Catholic to eat meat on Friday unless he pays for a dispensation? Hindus and others may become Mohammedans without change of character or the abandonment of any evil practices to which they are known to be addicted."

A well-known Mahatma, highly commended for holiness by Professor Max Müller, and said to be one of the greatest persons in India, swaying millions of men, told me on one occasion that I did wrong to be interested in poor people and that I should leave them alone in their miseries and destitutions. "They are suffering," he said, "for sins in their past lives." Some few months afterwards he was arrested, charged with a disgusting offence, and sent to prison.

At the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, Professor James Denney, of Glasgow, said: "People had got a smattering of comparative religions which made them indifferent, instead of realising from a far deeper study that the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian attitude to the Lord Jesus Christ was not a difference of more or less, better or worse, but *a difference of life and death*."

A doctor in India says that "the dedication of girls *to certain gods* remains a perpetual source of recruitment to the ranks of immorality and gives the latter a *religious sanction*." Young girls in India are *married* to Hindu gods: they are trained to dance and sing evil songs in preparation for a life of shame in Hindu temples. "It is well known in India," says my correspondent, "that in the Penal Code obscene representations in connection with religion are exempted from the penalties of the law." Can there be greater blasphemy or profounder ignorance than to liken such a devil's religion to the revelation of Christ?

## NOTE C. (Page 64.)

Some idea of the effect of Society's vulgarity on the poor and miserable may be gathered from the following description of an Anarchist meeting given by Miss Olive Christian Malvery in her book called *Thirteen Nights* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1909):—

"Three years ago I was one night the guest of a Russian lady and gentleman in London. They took me as a 'camarade' to a meeting of 'Red-caps,' held at eleven o'clock at night. What a company it was! Men and women filled with grim purpose—'the destruction of tyranny,' they called it. I sat cold with fear, yet I could not steel my heart against those outcasts. The foreigners impressed me most favourably; they had reasons for their hate. The English Anarchists were merely ruffians or tub-thumpers—creatures who would rather talk than work.

"Here I heard a strange gospel preached. A man—he was an Italian, I think—stood up; he was dressed all in black, but in his coat lapel was tied a tiny crimson knot. He held in his hand a sheaf of cuttings from the daily papers, and as he read them out slowly I judged that most of them must have been extracts from the 'Court and Society' or 'Fashionable Intelligence' columns.

There were notices of balls and theatricals and dinner-parties, with descriptions of the costly decorations and the ladies' expensive dresses and beautiful jewels. After these items came political news and very cleverly selected futilities that had been occupying Parliament. The strange company was stung to ironic laughter.

"When the man had finished reading his cuttings a young woman got up. She also was dressed in black, and wore on her breast a little crimson knot. She was a Jewess—evidently well educated. She had a packet of newspaper cuttings also, and read them slowly and solemnly in a fine full voice.

"This time the cuttings were from police news and odd news paragraphs. As the woman read one saw Hogarth-like pictures of realistic ugliness. Now it was a woman suicide, now a girl brought up for theft, she being a slave in some milliner's shop at 5s. a week. Then there was the case of a workman taken up for breaking windows. It was discovered that he had touched no food for two days, and had a starving wife and three little children. Again, there was the sentence on a poacher lad of 16, sent to jail for many months for snaring rabbits on a gentleman's estate. The cases were selected with marvellous cleverness for their purpose.

"When the woman had done an old man got up, he had fierce eyes and a long white beard. He was very tall and spoke in a commanding voice. His text was from the lessons that had been read—he contrasted the items of news and held up together the 'acts of justice' and the sentences. He showed side by side the bedizened women at the rich table and the cold little starvelings in the sweat-shop. The listeners wept—I with them. It was one of the most dramatic and thrilling sermons I have ever heard. The grim order and cruel method of the meeting made me shiver. After the texts had been expounded the foolish gabble of Parliament was held up to scorn. 'See what the Government is occupied with,' the man cried out, 'while we die!'

"There were groans from the audience. Every one was

in black, and a sinister gloom seemed to pervade the place.

"When the man finished speaking the whole company stood up, and a long silence ensued. Then a woman held up a scarlet handkerchief. Instantly every member of the company did the same; there was a waving sea of red flags, and the woman spoke somewhat like this:—

"'Comrades, this to our unity and steadfastness! In life and to death we pledge ourselves to sacrifice ourselves for the overthrow of tyranny and the upraising of justice. Through blood to freedom.'

"'Amen!' came the solemn chorus from the standing people."

## NOTE D. (Page 120.)

In another narrative I have indicated the difference which separates drunkenness from dipsomania. Briefly, in the one case the will consents, the vice is sought, repentance, if it manifests at all, is an after-effect; in the case of dipsomania there is a struggle of the will against the inclination, often of a most terrible nature, and then the will is swept aside and the madness has full sway.

It is interesting to observe that even after conversion a soul is distracted and torn by temptation. One may be allowed to think that in these sufferings is manifested the clear will of God on a matter almost wholly neglected by religious instruction—the pre-natal responsibility of parents to their posterity. The sins of the fathers are indeed visited upon the third and fourth generation, and a recognition of this law ought to be man's greatest security against intemperance and sin. Who can bear to think of bequeathing to his children a legacy of syphilitic blood and alcoholic tissues?

The mercy of God is exercised, so far as we can judge, by a provision of strength to the converted soul for resisting this recurring temptation. The strength increases, and the temptation diminishes, in equal ratio. In this

process the great and salutary warning of "visited sins" is not abrogated, and neither is the promise of answered prayer broken. It would no doubt seem to us a greater miracle if the sufferer were instantaneously delivered from the curse at the moment of conversion; but we may question if such an interposition of Divine power would be an act of mercy towards the human race. The penalty of the broken law is the elementary education of the soul, and mankind is very far at present from having learned that lesson.

It is neither a "dearest Mama" nor a weak and indulgent Father that the best of humanity seek in heaven, but a Power whose Fatherhood is manifested by a love that braces only the highest faculties and a mercy that strengthens to resist sin. We do not desire to be saved from ourselves, nor to sneak into a heaven sticky with sugar; but strengthened and inspired to mount upwards to the heights of being.

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